

PERFORMANCE PROFILE SERIES

# CREATING A HIGH-IMPACT RECRUITING CULTURE

Best Practices to Attract, Recruit  
and Select Top Performers





# AALU/GAMA'S POSITION ON PROSELYTIZING

Growth through proselytizing is destructive to our industry. It slows development for organizations and shrinks our critical mass. Our professionalism suffers and our market impact decreases, which leads to negative financial results.

# FOREWORD

I have gone full circle in the recruiting world, and I always come back to the same question, “How do we create a sustainable recruiting process?”

After using every recruitment test in the industry, I found that recruiting the right person comes down to one personality trait — upbeat. I have hired brilliant, intelligent and seemingly motivated individuals. But, because they lacked a constant positive attitude, the trials and tribulations all new advisors go through in their first year became insurmountable. If you recruit positive and optimistic people, they can handle rejection better. Recruiting this way has helped my office culture and our firm’s ability to retain advisors.

A fun office atmosphere filled with a lot of pride for the organization has brought my firm and me great success. I am 100 percent accountable for the culture, so I create a place where people can take risks, make good and bad decisions, learn from their mistakes and feel great about their work. Even our receptionist is involved in recruiting. She is our first initial impression. She feels she is the most important person in the organization because our culture and atmosphere start with her. Involve everyone in recruiting and empower them to make decisions to better help the firm.

Ultimately, a high-impact recruiting culture consists of making sure everyone in the firm understands how the firm’s vision of growth impacts every advisor and employee in the organization. We have fun and promote that fun whenever and wherever we can in the community, industry and, of course, on social media. Our growing team now has more opportunities than ever before!

**John Bucsek, CFP**

**CEO, MassMutual Tri State**

**Foundation Chair, 2020-2022**

**John Bucsek, CEO of MassMutual Tri State, serves as President of the Financial Planning Association of NJ, Chair of the GAMA Foundation for Education and Research, and served on the Board of Trustees for eight years. As a CFP® practitioner, John knows the value of personalized advice in a highly regulated environment. Compliance, morale, growth and ingenuity have been and remain the key drivers in his organization. His success with financial firms has spanned 4 decades. His development of financial professionals and managers is based on his broad knowledge of the industry and client needs. By developing financial teams, his organizations have the competitive edge.**

**The Foundation expresses its sincere thanks to Mr. Bucsek for his commitment to the profession and his generosity as a major donor to the Foundation.**

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

In a profession where the four-year retention rate has held steady at a low of 11 percent and a high of 16 percent for more than a decade<sup>1</sup>, attracting, finding and selecting top performers remains the No. 1 priority for most agency and firm leaders.

Over the years, the Foundation has funded many research projects on best practices in recruiting and selection. This report is a compilation of the key findings from those studies. We've updated the research and included the most pertinent information in one document.

Throughout the report, you will find strategies and tools from top-performing field leaders as well as questions that you can use to lead discussions with your team.

For a more in-depth study of each of the topics discussed in this report and for additional resources on creating a high-impact recruiting culture in your agency or firm, see the Additional Resources page at the end of this report.



**Watch for this icon for ideas you can use in your agency or firm.**

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# INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Foundation for Education and Research published *Finding the Right People*, the result of an extensive study to identify how the recruiting and selection practices of top-performing leaders differed from those of their lower-performing peers. This highly acclaimed study revealed that more productive agencies and firms are rigorous in evaluating candidates throughout the entire recruiting and selection process. Because these new agents and advisors are a better fit, they are less likely to leave, thus enhancing productivity and retention over the long term.

# Finding the Right People Research Results

## What Top Performers Do Differently

### Candidate Profile

#### TOP PERFORMERS:

- See integrity as the most important characteristic of their profile.
- Place a high priority on personality and interpersonal traits in their candidate profile.

### Tools to Assess Willingness and Ability

#### TOP PERFORMERS:

- Use more job-sampling activities earlier in the process.
- Focus pre-contract training on prospecting rather than sales activity.
- Use a pre-contract period nearly double that of their peers.
- Begin validation earlier in the selection process.

### Recruiting Sources

#### TOP PERFORMERS:

- Cultivate a recruiting mindset in their leadership team, agents, advisors and staff.
- Create a structured system for generating referrals.
- Integrate personal observation into their routine and train their leadership team to do the same.

### Tools to Assess Fit

#### TOP PERFORMERS:

- Involve more team members in the interview process.
- Provide opportunities for candidates to assess fit.

### Selection Process

#### TOP PERFORMERS:

- Trust and adhere to their selection process.
- Actively manage and measure the steps in their selection process.
- Use selection tools for multiple purposes.

### Recruiting Process

#### TOP PERFORMERS:

- Have a strong recruiting mindset.
- Track and measure all aspects of recruiting.

# CULTURE DRIVES HIGH PERFORMANCE

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In 2018, the Foundation funded research to review and update three of its most influential studies: *Finding the Right People*, *Building the Right People* and *Keeping the Right People*. This new research resulted in the *Building a High-Performance Business* series.

The *Building a High-Performance Business* research revealed that, while the best practices identified in the original studies are still valid, there are 10 that have the greatest impact on high performance. Using these 10 best practices, leaders create cultures that foster high-impact recruiting, high expectations, high trust and high-impact learning.

## *Building the Right People Research Results The 10 Best Practices that Drive High Performance*

### High-Impact Recruiting Culture

1. Cultivate a recruiting mindset in your agency or firm.
2. Focus on warm-source recruiting.
3. Apply a rigorous and consistent approach to selection.

### High-Expectations Culture

4. Set high expectations and hold new agents and advisors accountable for achieving them.
5. Strengthen new agent and advisor connections to the profession and to the agency or firm.

### High-Trust Culture

6. Act with integrity.
7. Acknowledge the contributions and expertise of top performers.

### High-Impact Learning Culture

8. Seek out and become early adopters of new ideas and best practices.
9. Emphasize the positive aspects of risk taking.
10. Overcome barriers to execution.

# BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING A HIGH-IMPACT RECRUITING CULTURE

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This study provides an in-depth look at the three best practices for creating a high-impact recruiting culture identified in the 2018 *Building a High-Performance Business* research. By applying these practices in your agency or firm, you can create a culture where everyone is focused on activities that bring in the strongest candidate and actively engaged in helping the organization grow.

## Recruiting and Selection Best Practices that Drive High Performance

1.

Cultivate a recruiting mindset in your agency or firm.

2.

Focus on warm-source recruiting.

3.

Apply a rigorous and consistent approach to selection.



See [Additional Resources](#) at the end of this report for a list of additional resources in the *Creating a High-Impact Recruiting Culture* series.



# CULTIVATE A RECRUITING MINDSET IN YOUR AGENCY OR FIRM

*“The difference between a recruiting environment where people are expected to recruit and building a high-impact recruiting culture is one where people are excited and motivated to have that be the first thing that they tackle every day.”*

—Stephanie Rivas, Managing Director, The New York Financial Group

**In high-performing agencies and firms, almost half of all referrals are obtained without prompting.** Agents, advisors and staff in these organizations view providing referrals and growing the business as an important part of their responsibility. Recruiting is embedded in the culture and everyone contributes to the process.

To cultivate a recruiting mindset in your agency or firm:

- Integrate recruiting into each component of your business framework.
- Develop processes to reinforce and support a recruiting mindset.



Listen to the Foundation podcast with Stephanie Rivas from The New York Financial Group on cultivating a recruiting mindset.



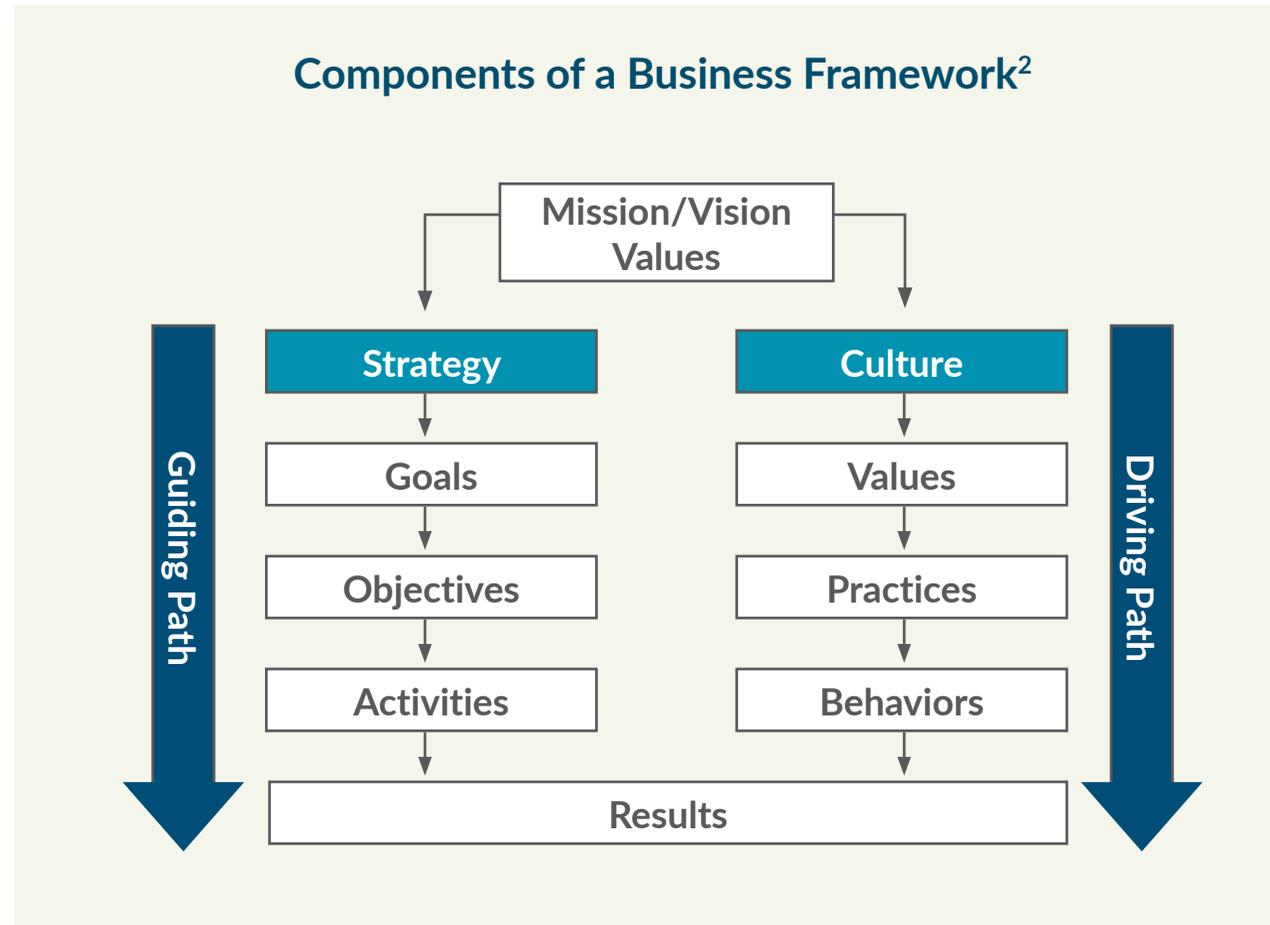
**Add candidate nominations to your weekly accountability coaching, skill builder or sales builder agendas.**

# INTEGRATE RECRUITING INTO EACH COMPONENT OF YOUR BUSINESS FRAMEWORK

Successful leaders cultivate a recruiting mindset in their agencies and firms by including recruiting in each component of the business framework. While most leaders establish a recruiting strategy – the goals, objectives and activities required to achieve results – many neglect to address culture. A mindset is a collection of thoughts and beliefs that influence people’s behaviors and actions. Your culture reflects those thoughts, beliefs, behaviors and actions.



Have new agents or advisors sign a letter of understanding that outlines referral expectations.



# DEVELOP PROCESSES TO REINFORCE AND SUPPORT A RECRUITING MINDSET



Hold monthly marketing meetings to get referrals or run recruiting campaigns. Make it fun with prizes, food and celebrations.

*“To create a recruiting mindset in your agency, recruiting must be an ongoing and continuous process of your daily activities as a manager. That’s how it becomes part of the culture – when people see you making that effort every day. Whether your business is a multi-line exclusive agency (MLEA) or in the financial services industry, your mindset should be the same – to recruit and retain the best talent available to help your agency and team grow to its full potential.”*

–Kevin Sherwood, Agency Manager, COUNTRY Financial®

*Changing behaviors doesn’t happen overnight. To cultivate and sustain a recruiting mindset in your agency or firm, remember the four C’s:*

**Clarity.** Establish clear expectations with agents, advisors and staff about their recruiting activities. Include these expectations in your recruiting strategy and goals. Clearly explain the recruiting and selection process and each team member’s role in the process.

**Communication.** Consistent and ongoing communication is paramount. Talk about the importance of referrals to the overall success of the organization. Discuss how achieving the organization’s goals supports individual goals. Conduct weekly meetings to discuss the status of recruiting goals and objectives. Keep the team informed on the status of referrals and recognize those who are achieving their recruiting goals.

**Confidence.** Build confidence by giving your team the skills they need to succeed. Make sure team members fully understand the ideal candidate profile. Invest time in developing personal observation skills, including how to identify and approach strong candidates. These skills are especially important for staff as they have less experience than agents and advisors in asking for referrals.

**Culture.** Tailor strategies to your culture and environment. College recruiting may work in one area, but not another. Having a natural market may be a higher priority in a multiline agency than in a life firm. Rural versus urban, East Coast versus West Coast, life versus multiline – all have unique characteristics. A strategy that is aligned with your culture is more likely to succeed.

## Create an Abundance Mindset

Agents and advisors are sometimes reluctant to provide referrals if they feel new recruits may become competitors. Overcome this scarcity mentality and create a culture of abundance by providing statistics on the many opportunities available. For example according to the 2016 LIMRA “Life Insurance Ownership in Focus” report, almost half of all U.S. households have a life insurance gap. And the March 2019 Government Accounting Office report on the financial status of older Americans (GAO-19-442), shows that 48 percent of Americans age 55 and older have no retirement savings.





## Tools You Can Use

### *Strategies to Reinforce a Recruiting Mindset in Your Agency or Firm*

- 1. Share your recruiting-culture vision.** Creating a recruiting mindset is more than simply giving people goals. It's sharing a vision that they can get excited about and that makes them feel like they are part of something bigger.
- 2. Repeat it often.** Make the vision part of people's daily lives.
- 3. Make sure your agency or firm is referable.** Ask people what they think of the culture. Are they proud to recommend a career with your agency or firm?
- 4. Make it an event.** Hold a kickoff meeting to share your vision and to discuss what a high-impact recruiting culture looks like. Explain how it benefits everyone.
- 5. Be inclusive.** Involve everyone on the team — leaders, agents, advisors and staff.
- 6. Provide a consistent message.** Coach people to be sure everyone is talking about the culture and the opportunity in the same way.
- 7. Give people talking points.** Make sure the team has the information they need to feel comfortable recruiting. Their role is to generate names. The rest is up to you.



For more information on changing mindsets, download your free copies of the Foundation eBook series on *Leading Change* at [www.gamafoundation.org](http://www.gamafoundation.org).

## Questions to Consider

1. How referable is your agency or firm? What challenges does the team see in bringing new people into your business?

2. How comfortable are agents, advisors and staff in asking for referrals or approaching potential candidates? What knowledge and skills would help them feel better prepared?

3. How well does the team understand the impact finding and selecting top performers has on the business and on their individual goals?

4. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high), how committed is your team to helping your business grow? What can you do to strengthen that commitment?



## FOCUS ON WARM-SOURCE RECRUITING

*“I believe givers get. If I’m not giving something to my reps, why would they give something to me? I bring them prospects. I give as much as I can to all my reps first. After that, I don’t need to ask for candidates. They just automatically give them to me.”*

—John Romero, Jr., Regional Assistant Vice President, Thrivent Financial

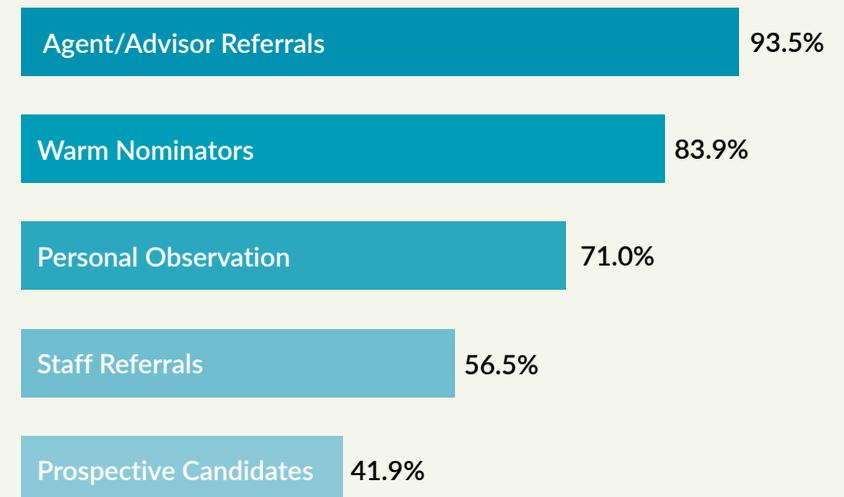
In the Foundation's *Building a High-Performance Business* research, leaders affirmed that warm-source recruiting still yields the highest-quality candidates. Many leaders in our study are focusing most, if not all, of their efforts on warm-source recruiting.

To focus on warm-source recruiting in your agency or firm:

- Design strategies to identify and attract top performers.
- Optimize your referral process.
- Develop your warm-source network.
- Use social media as a warm-source recruiting tool.

## **Building a High-Performance Business Research Results**

### **Primary Recruiting Sources of High-Performing Agencies and Firms**



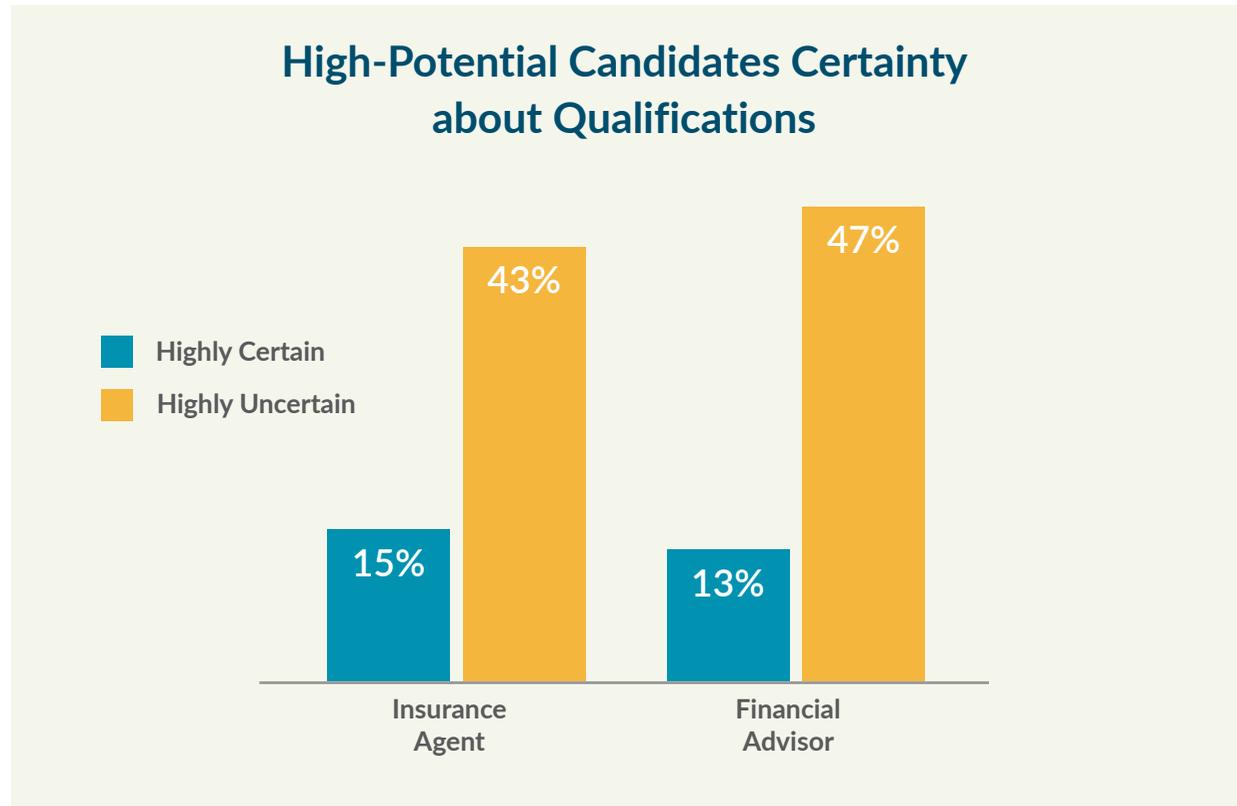
# DESIGN STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND ATTRACT TOP PERFORMERS

Foundation research estimates that about 40 percent of the general public match the criteria for top performers in the profession. But most don't understand the agent and financial advisor roles and aren't confident they have the skills required. In a survey of almost 2,000 high-potential candidates, all of whom met the top-performer criteria, nearly half indicated they were highly uncertain about their qualifications.

This profession provides abundant personal and professional opportunities for the right people. But who are they and how do you successfully attract them into the career?

To identify and attract top performers to your agency or firm:

- Develop an ideal candidate profile.
- Use messages that attract top performers.



For more on the Foundation's *Attracting the Right People* research, visit [www.gamafoundation.org](http://www.gamafoundation.org).

## Develop an Ideal Candidate Profile

Effective recruiting and selection begins with identifying your ideal candidate and developing a detailed list of the qualities, characteristics and traits that are critical for them to succeed in the profession and in your agency or firm. Your profile should be specific to your culture, demographics and leadership style.

Foundation research has shown that top-performing leaders have a clearer idea of who they are looking for than their lower-performing peers. They use these profiles as a framework for all recruiting and selection activities. In recruiting, a clear definition of the type of candidate you are trying to attract helps agents, advisors, staff and centers of influence focus their recruiting and referral efforts. During selection, your profile provides a yardstick against which to measure potential candidates.



**Watch a video of top field leaders discussing their ideal candidate profiles.**

*“It’s important to spend time thinking through what you’re trying to build and who you’re trying to build it with, and then, stay true to that. We all think we can change people. You can influence people, but if they’re not aligned with what you feel is important at the core, you can’t change that.”*

—Ryan Moratti, Managing Partner  
Lakeshore Financial Group



Traits defined in candidate profiles usually fall into five categories:



## The Ideal Candidate Profile of Top-Performing Leaders

While there is no one “right” candidate profile, there are certain universal characteristics that high-performing leaders look for in candidates. These leaders place an emphasis on personality and interpersonal traits that are critical for financial services professionals to function in today’s business environment.

Top-performing leaders focus more on who a candidate is, rather than what a candidate wants. It isn’t that top performers aren’t looking for ambition and achievement; it’s that they place a higher value on other traits. Drive and ambition cannot come at the expense of integrity and ethics.

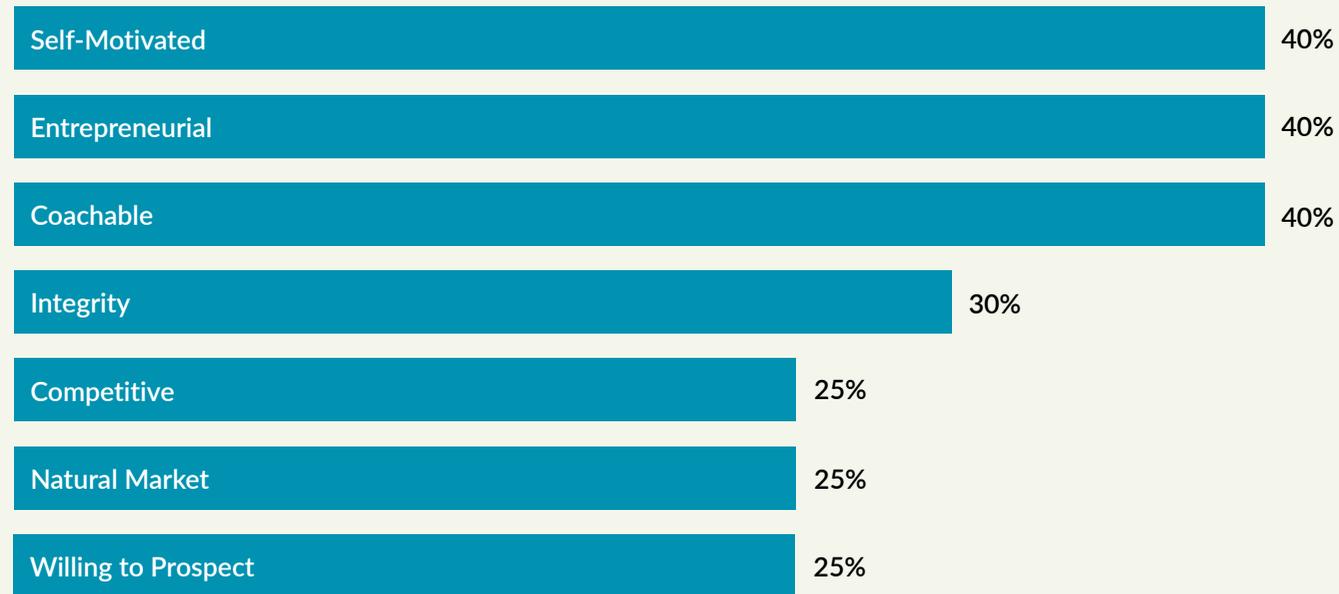
## Finding the Right People Research Results Top Five Traits in Candidate Profiles of Top-Performing and Lower-Performing Organizations



In a 2020 Foundation survey, leaders continue to emphasize personality and interpersonal traits.

## 2020 Survey Results\*

### *Most Important Characteristics of an Ideal Candidate*



\*Includes all field leaders not separated by high-performing and lower-performing leaders.



## Tools You Can Use

### *Interview Questions to Screen for Integrity*

1. There is sometimes a narrow line between ethical and unethical behavior. Can you tell me about a time when you were in such a borderline situation and how you handled it?
  - What problem did you encounter?
  - What did you change as a result of the experience?
  
2. Can you describe a situation in which you found it important to take an unpopular stand?
  - What was the response?
  - What were you thinking?
  - How often have you done this?
  
3. Many times, individuals experience workplace pressures to make or to accept a decision with which they disagree. Has this ever happened to you?
  - What was the situation and how did you handle it?
  - What was the outcome?

## Use Messages that Attract Top Performers

*“Not everyone understands the career. If you’re in front of a group of college kids and you ask, ‘Hey who wants to be in the insurance business?’ all the hands would probably go down. But when you talk about the income and how you’re helping people, all the hands would go back up. The challenge is to communicate that story.”*

—Thomas Biljan, Managing Partner, Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan

The Foundation research has shown that many of the sales-focused messages leaders use are not attracting people who fit the top-performer profile. In fact, the messages that attract top performers don’t focus on sales at all. High-potential candidates identified the professional criteria most important to them in the Foundation’s ground-breaking study, *Attracting the Right People*. The Foundation then developed and tested different messages based on those criteria.

**The three messages that have the most appeal across all demographics are:**

**1.**

**Become your own business.**

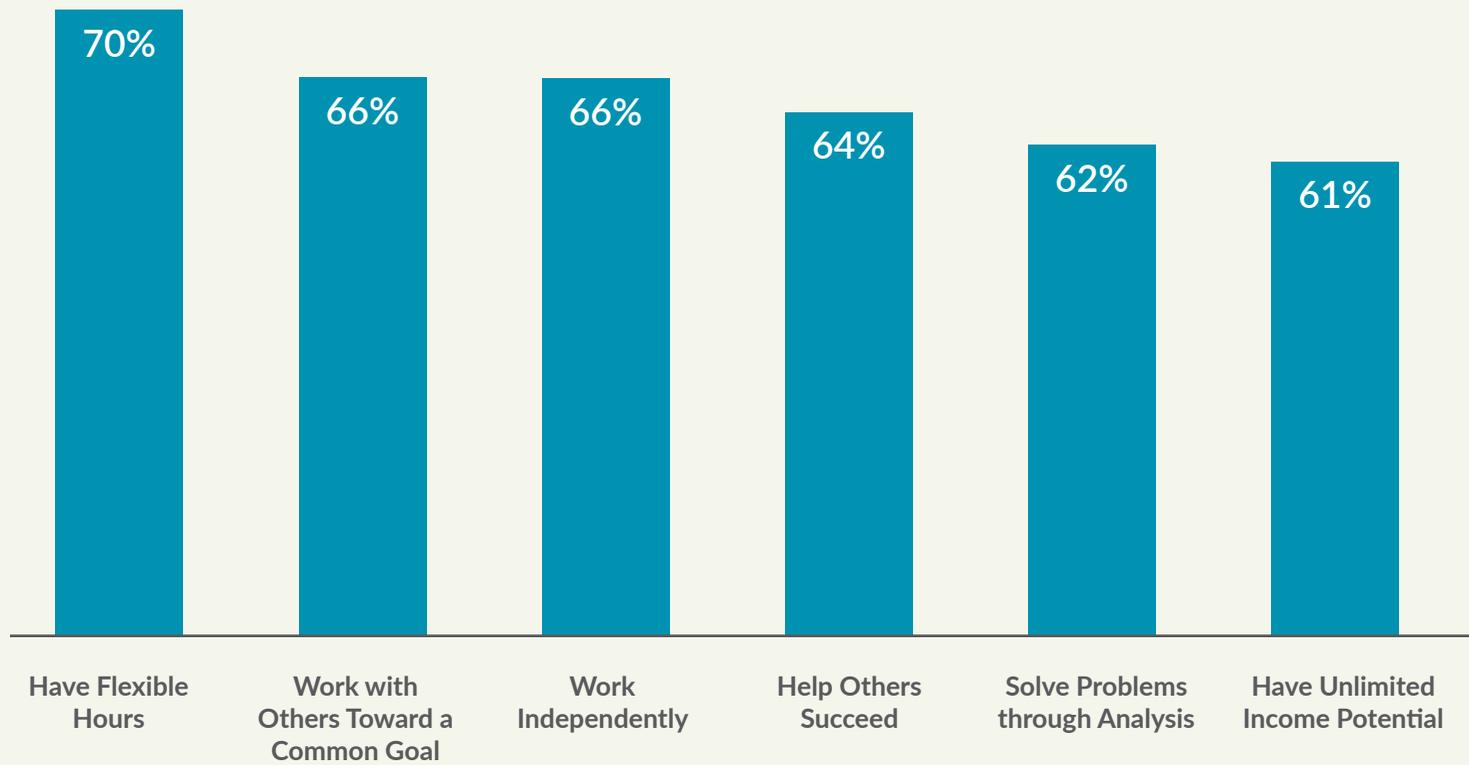
**2.**

**Grow through professional development.**

**3.**

**Succeed as a people person.**

**Attracting the Right People Research Results**  
*Criteria Top-Potential Candidates Identified as Extremely Important*

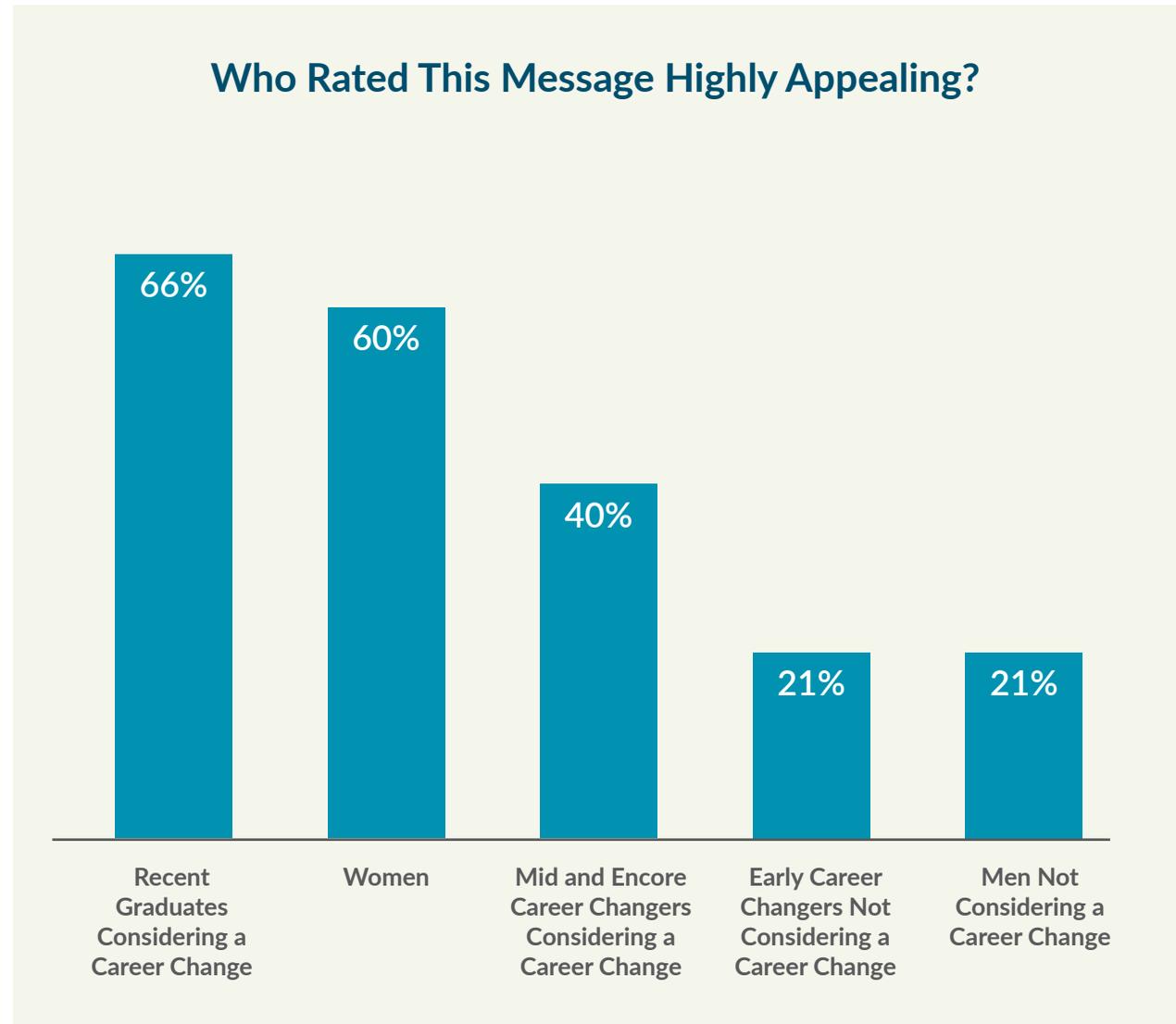


## Become Your Own Business

Of all the messages tested in the *Attracting the Right People* research, the best-performing one talks about becoming your own business without high risk or capital. The idea that the profession offers people a way to go into business for themselves performed very strongly in several key pools of candidates

### *The Test Message:*

**Becoming a financial advisor is often said to be like going into business for yourself, with all the independence and flexibility it implies, but without the capital investment required to start a business and with extensive support from the company and firm.**



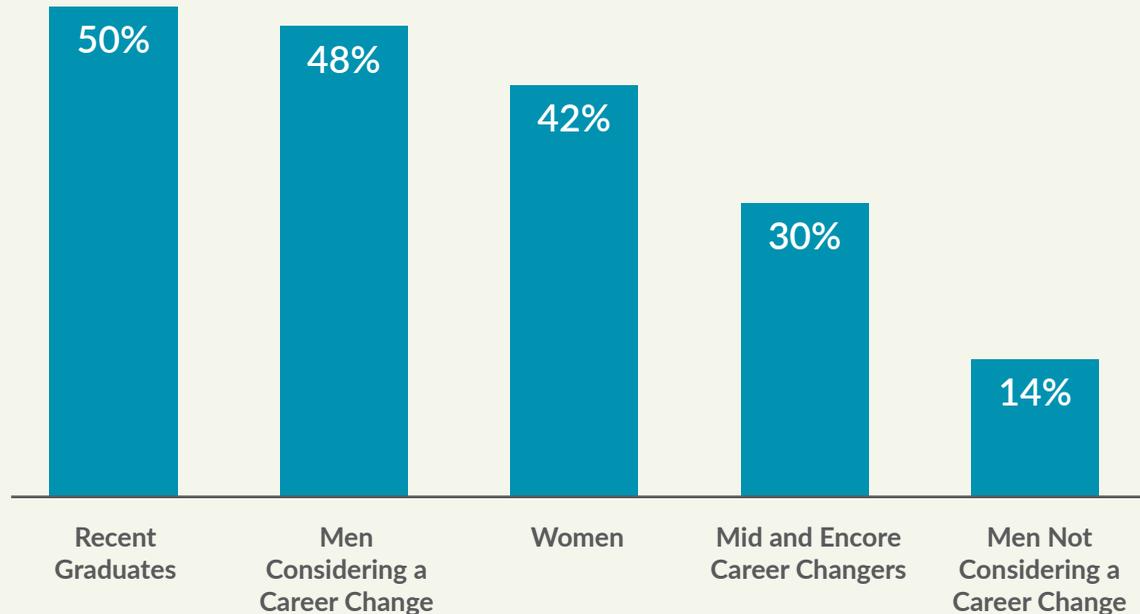
## Grow through Professional Development

The second highest-performing message addresses people's desire for personal development as well as their uncertainty about their qualifications for the profession.

### *The Test Message:*

It is common that new financial advisors enter their careers with no prior special training or experience in financial services, and no degree or background in finance or business is required. Instead the industry invests heavily in training and development. In fact, industry figures estimate that most companies invest between \$100,000 and \$250,000 in training and development in the first three years of a new hire's career.

## Who Rated This Message Highly Appealing?

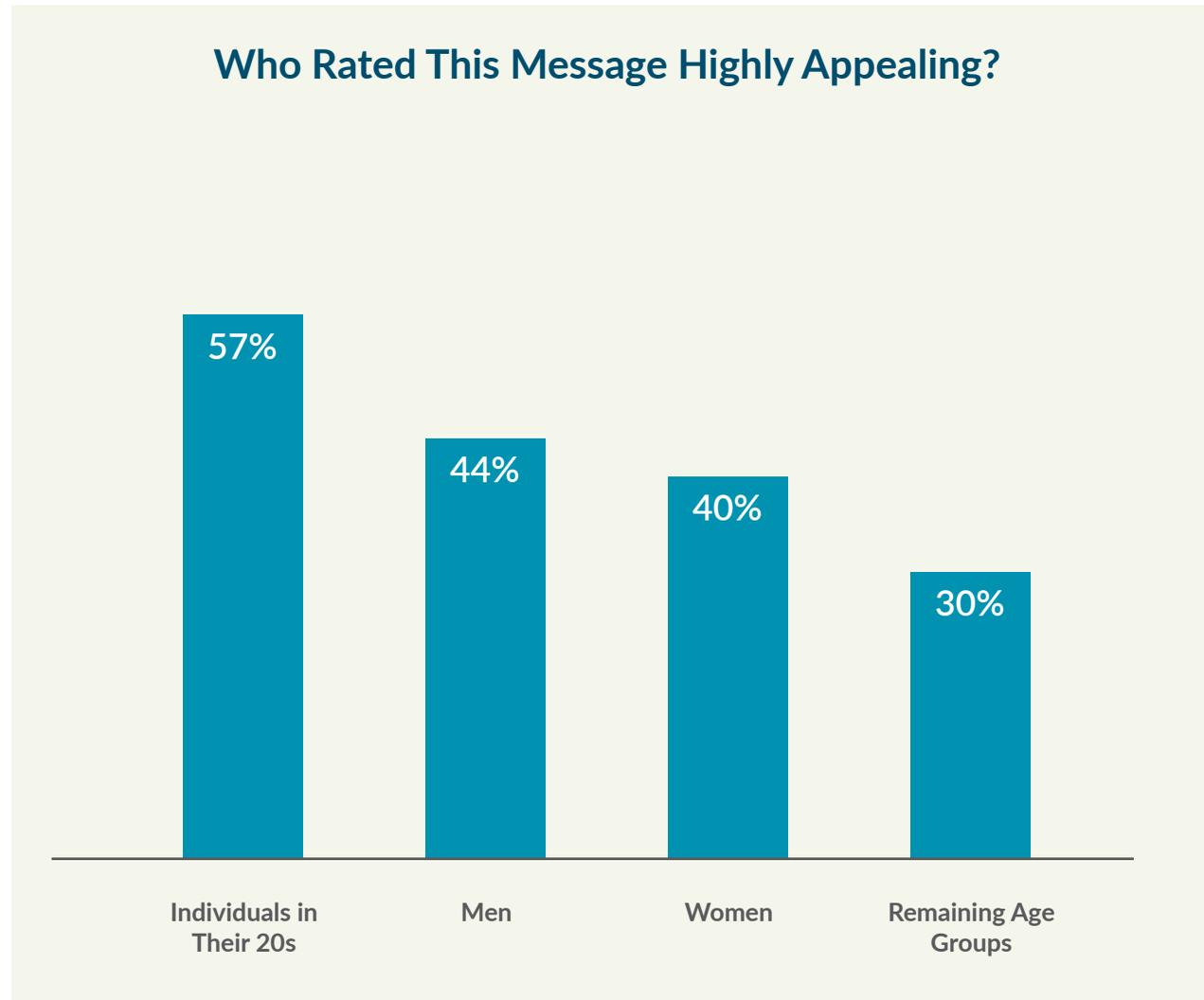


## Succeed as a People Person

The third-strongest message addresses the helping aspect of the profession that high-potential candidates consider important in a career.

### *The Test Message:*

**Being a people person is a winning trait of successful financial advisors. Every day is an opportunity to meet or reconnect with someone who needs your help.**



## Attracting Women into the Profession

Based on the results of the Foundation’s *Attracting the Right People* research, this is a profession that should be extremely attractive to women. It has no glass ceiling, pays the same to men and women based on performance, provides professional development and offers an opportunity to help others. Yet, bringing women into the profession remains a challenge for many field leaders. Fewer than one in 10 field leaders reported having enough female advisors to constitute more than 40 percent of their total advisors.

*“It was a good fit because I could be really involved and help people on a daily basis. I could change someone’s life in this career, and I could be flexible and create the business the way I wanted it to be, and that was super appealing to me.”*

—Heidi Moore, Financial Representative, COUNTRY Financial®

*Approximately what percent of the advisors in your agency or firm are female?*

	Response Percent		
	All Mgt. Positions	Female Sales Managers	Male Sales Managers
None	5%	3%	9%
1 to 10%	29%	29%	38%
11 to 20%	23%	26%	16%
21 to 30%	23%	26%	21%
31 to 40%	11%	14%	9%
41 to 50%	7%	3%	9%
More than 50%	2%	0%	0%



Download a free copy of the Foundation eBook, *Recruiting Women to the Advisor Career*, at [www.gamafoundation.org](http://www.gamafoundation.org).

## Perceptions of the Profession

Inaccurate perceptions about financial services agent and advisor roles abound. For instance, Foundation research reveals that:

- Women think they need strong accounting or math skills to succeed as a financial advisor.
- Women identify a lack of direct experience or knowledge as a barrier to entering the profession. Men, on the other hand, don't believe that direct experience or knowledge is a requirement for entry.
- If a woman interviews at a firm with no other women and lacks direct experience, she will likely not feel welcome or think she can succeed. This perception reduces the number of female candidates who join the agency or firm.

Unfortunately, these perceptions persist, in part, because the profession remains dominated by men. As more women are recruited, become visible in the profession and communicate their feeling of career fulfillment, the perception of the profession will change for the better.



**Create short videos of top female agents or advisors talking about the profession and the opportunity from their perspective. Address the inaccurate perceptions many women have about the profession.**

### What You Should Know<sup>3</sup>

Women make up **52%** of the U.S. population.

Women control **60%** of all U.S. wealth.

Nearly **50%** of the U.S. workforce are women.

Women control **80%** of consumer spending.

Women own close to **10 million** businesses, accounting for \$1.4 trillion in receipts.

40% of all people in the U.S. with gross investable assets above **\$600K** are women.



## Tools You Can Use

### *Strategies to Customize Messages to Recruit Women into the Profession*

- 1. Emphasize the right priorities.** Women tend to prioritize different aspects of the career compared with men. Develop a message that best presents the industry and its opportunities for women. Emphasize the ability to help others, flexibility and life balance, equal treatment and equal opportunity to make money.
- 2. Present the level playing field.** Discuss how agents' and advisors' value is based on their performance, not gender.
- 3. Provide details.** Provide specific information on the training and education provided. Speak to any concerns a female candidate may have about needing an education or background in finance.
- 4. Emphasize mentoring, joint work and team efforts.** These build confidence that you want candidates to succeed – a critical message for a woman who may not feel 100 percent comfortable joining the industry.
- 5. Explain her fit in the industry.** Review how her experience and skills make her a good fit for the industry. Using real-life examples, outline how she can benefit personally, professionally and financially.
- 6. Talk about the opportunity differently.** Use statistics [What You Should Know](#) to explain how women are uniquely positioned for success in the profession.



[Watch a video of top field leaders discussing recruiting for diversity.](#)

## Recruiting to Teams

*“You need to be the visionary for a teaming culture in your organization first. Your leadership is critical to the successful implementation of teams. As teams are established, advisors need to build their vision for their team and implement that vision with your partnership.”*

—David LaBricciosa, Managing Partner, Aspire Wealth Planners

Recruiting for teams is typically handled at the agency or firm level. Candidates are usually recruited specifically for teams and the team is involved in the recruiting and selection process. Some leaders have candidates interview with several teams to find the best fit. Some require new recruits to work as solo practitioners for six to 12 months to gain experience before joining a team.

Eighty-three percent of team members in the Foundation’s research on teams indicated that selecting the right people is the most critical success factor for the team. In addition to recruiting for specific roles and skillsets, leaders and teams look for team members who:

- Are highly trustworthy.
- Have values that match the team’s values.
- Are self-starters with a strong work ethic.
- Are good communicators, especially good listeners.

When recruiting candidates for teams:

- 1. Look for the right skills.** The key to forming strong teams is finding people with complementary skills. If everyone on the team is great at closing, but there are no rainmakers and no one is great at proposals and processing, it isn’t going to work.
- 2. Look for the right fit.** Look for team members who share similar visions and long-range plans. For example, if the team’s vision is to accelerate growth and a potential partner wants a small, select client base, it may not be the right fit.
- 3. Look for similar work ethics.** If some members take a lot more vacation than others or work far fewer hours, it can cause friction on a team.



Ask potential team members these three questions:

- 1. Are you truly committed? If a team is going to succeed, everyone on the team must be fully committed to the team in everything they do.**
- 2. Do you have a shared plan? The entire team must agree on the vision, goals and business strategy for the practice.**
- 3. Are you prepared for financial sacrifice? It can take three to five years for a team to see significant results. New team members must be emotionally prepared to give up some revenue in the short term for long-term gain.**



## Tools You Can Use

### *Strategies to Customize Messages When Recruiting to Teams*

Emphasize the following benefits when recruiting candidates to teams:

- **Specialization.** Being on a team typically means having the opportunity to specialize (markets, products and steps in the sales process, for example).
- **Compensation.** Compensation stress may be reduced for new recruits in a split-compensation team model.
- **Coaching and Mentoring.** Generally coaching and mentoring are readily available to new team recruits which can lead to early success.
- **Camaraderie.** Teams allow for diversity of personalities, energy levels, collaboration and idea sharing.
- **Work-Life Balance.** After teams are established, team-based practices often provide better opportunities for work-life balance.



For more information on the Foundation's Power of Teams research, visit [www.gamafoundation.org](http://www.gamafoundation.org).



**When recruiting millennials and Gen Z candidates, emphasize the professional development, mentoring and specialization opportunities when joining a team. These candidates are seeking opportunities with a career path.**

## College Recruiting

*“When you compare the pressure and obligations a recent college graduate has to a career-changer with an established life-style and baked in financial obligations, it’s a wonder the entire industry is not exclusively recruiting from colleges.”*

—Davin Bell, Financial Advisor, North Star Consultants of Texas

Nearly four million students are estimated to graduate from college in 2020, creating an incredibly rich pool of candidates from which to recruit and share your story.<sup>4</sup>

Some leaders see college debt as a deterrent to recruiting college graduates. But the income-based repayment options available today can create a path for recent graduates to operate with very low loan payments while pouring their energies into building a career. Career-changers, who often have their own financial obligations (mortgages, children, and so forth), with no “program” to reduce them, may have more difficulty during their first few years building a practice.

In a 2019 study conducted by TD Ameritrade, only 37 percent of the students surveyed said they were aware of the financial services profession, but 63 percent indicated they might be interested after learning more about it.<sup>5</sup> With messaging and a value proposition that attracts this generation, college recruiting can be a valuable source for finding high-potential recruits.



**Consider bringing college students in under an internship program. This gives you an opportunity to assess their fit with your culture and the business, and gives them an opportunity to see if this is the right career for them.**



Visit [www.gamaweb.com](http://www.gamaweb.com) for information about the **GAMA Career Collaborative (GCC) internship program.**



## Tools You Can Use

### *Strategies for College Recruiting*

- 1. The ideal college candidate.** The best candidates are often student athletes who have learned to manage both the rigors of a class schedule and a demanding practice/game schedule. These students are conditioned to use their time wisely and with purpose. Other strong candidates include students who are involved in activities where they are responsible for organizing and running an event or program – something that illustrates that they can manage multiple priorities and a demanding workload.
- 2. Centers of influence.** Build relationships with the coaches and professors who are student advisors. They can identify students who are natural leaders.
- 3. Onboarding.** College graduates want to make an impact. They want to feel a sense of community. And they want training. Make sure you have a training and development plan that includes frequent communication and high engagement.



**Get involved – volunteer to teach courses and give presentations at colleges and universities.**

# OPTIMIZE YOUR REFERRAL PROCESS

Not surprisingly, agent and advisor referrals are the most frequently used recruiting source and generate the highest quality candidates. People within the organization understand what it takes to be successful in the business and are careful guardians of the culture. They are more likely to refer candidates they believe will succeed, and they often have a better sense of who will fit with the culture. In a high-impact recruiting culture, team members provide referrals out of a genuine desire to help the agency or firm grow.

To optimize your referral process:

- Use a consistent, structured approach to manage the referral process.
- Expand your referral program to include staff.



**Rather than the traditional presentation-style career night, do something more informal, at a winery or brewery, for example. Ask agents and advisors to bring their friends. Use this more social, conversational environment to have agents and advisors talk about what they do.**

## Use a Consistent, Structured Approach to Manage the Referral Process

Foundation research has shown that high-performing leaders use a more consistent and structured approach to manage their referral processes. Consistency and structure reinforce for agents and advisors the importance of recruiting and of maintaining a recruiting mindset.

Common components of a structured referral process include:

- **Educating agents and advisors on the ideal candidate profile and on the process used to approach, recruit and select referred candidates.** People are more likely to provide names when they understand the process and are confident referrals will be treated fairly and with professionalism.
- **Scheduling monthly or quarterly meetings to ask agents and advisors for referrals.** Most leaders use checklists to help agents and advisors think of prospective candidates. When meetings are scheduled at regular intervals, they become ingrained in the culture and reinforce the recruiting mindset.
- **Tracking and monitoring referrals as they proceed through the selection process.** Tracking candidates helps leaders to provide specific feedback to agents and advisors and provides valuable information that helps leaders refine their ideal candidate profile and improve the selection process.
- **Updating agents and advisors on the status of their referred candidates.** Keeping agents and advisors informed lets them know you have acted on their recommendations and reinforces their contributions to the growth of the business. It also provides an opportunity to give feedback on why referrals were or were not strong candidates which helps them to identify stronger candidates in the future.
- **Explaining how candidates are assessed.** Agents and advisors are sometimes reluctant to provide referrals because they don't feel someone meets all the criteria. Understanding the process, including the assessments and selection steps candidates go through, makes advisors more comfortable providing referrals.
- **Rewarding and recognizing agents and advisors for referrals.** Leaders offer both financial and non-financial incentives. Some programs include incentives for the referral itself and additional incentives if a referral is hired. Non-financial incentives include awards, recognition at events and in publications and personal thank you notes.

## Expand Your Referral Program to Include Staff

Many field leaders overlook this rich source of candidates, yet research shows staff referrals are rated relatively high in terms of candidate quality. Most programs require only minor tweaks to make them appropriate for staff.

Changes to your existing agent/advisor referral program should include:

**Providing more in-depth training and education for staff.** Staff members may not be familiar with the profession. Spend time reviewing your ideal candidate profile and the qualities you are looking for in an agent or advisor. Create a checklist to show the types of people who might be successful in the profession. Use examples to demonstrate why one candidate is stronger than another.

**Explaining the why.** To overcome the potential, “that’s not my job” syndrome, help staff understand the link between growing the business and achieving their individual goals. Explain why it is important that they are actively involved in the referral process.

**Using a more formal process for staff.** Staff referrals are much more likely to come after prompting and as the result of a formal process. Keep staff informed of the progress of candidates throughout the process and make sure to explain why a candidate was accepted or not accepted. And include staff in any recognition or incentive programs tied to recruiting.

**Celebrating all leads.** Don’t let a poor nomination discourage team members’ desire to try again. Celebrate all leads whether hired or not.



**Have staff members take the assessments you use with recruits to give them a better understanding of the process and the type of candidates most likely to succeed in the business.**



## Tools You Can Use

### *The Agent/Advisor Referral Lunch*

- 1. The Invitation.** When you set up the appointment, let the agent or advisor know the purpose is to gather referrals as a benefit to you, to them and to the agency or firm. Block off two hours for the meeting.
- 2. Preparation.** Before the meeting, secure a client list for the last 12 to 24 months. Bring a nominator checklist.
- 3. The Lunch.** Set a casual, relaxed tone. Don't talk business until lunch is finished. Use the time during lunch to catch up on life outside of the office.
- 4. The Why.** Spend about 10 minutes explaining the ways that the agency or firm benefits from quality referrals.
- 5. Referred Lead Principal.** Agents and advisors are often reluctant to ask clients for referrals for fear of damaging relationships. Explain your telephone approach to referred candidates. When they know candidates will be approached in a professional manner, they are more open to the process.
- 6. Nominator Checklist.** Review the nominator checklist with advisors and go through the items on the list one-by-one.
- 7. Client List.** Ask the advisor to look over the client list to see if that causes any new prospects to jump out at them. Let them know they can take the list with them, so they don't worry there is a list of their clients loose in the office.
- 8. Thanks.** Be sure to thank your agents and advisors and provide them with updates as you process the names they provided.

# DEVELOP YOUR WARM-SOURCE NETWORK

*If you've taken the time to boil your ideal candidate profile down to some key characteristics and you can communicate that concisely, you're going to help your centers of influence be more effective. You're going to help them understand who you are looking for and who you're not."*

Cory Erickson, Senior Storefront Manager, American Family Insurance

People are more likely to decide to work for your agency or firm when they feel they know you, can trust you and can rely on you for support. Developing relationships with leaders in the community and getting involved in local organizations gives you opportunities to demonstrate those characteristics to potential recruits and to the community at large.

To develop your warm-source network:

1. Build strong relationships with centers of influence.
2. Connect with your community.

## 2020 Survey Results

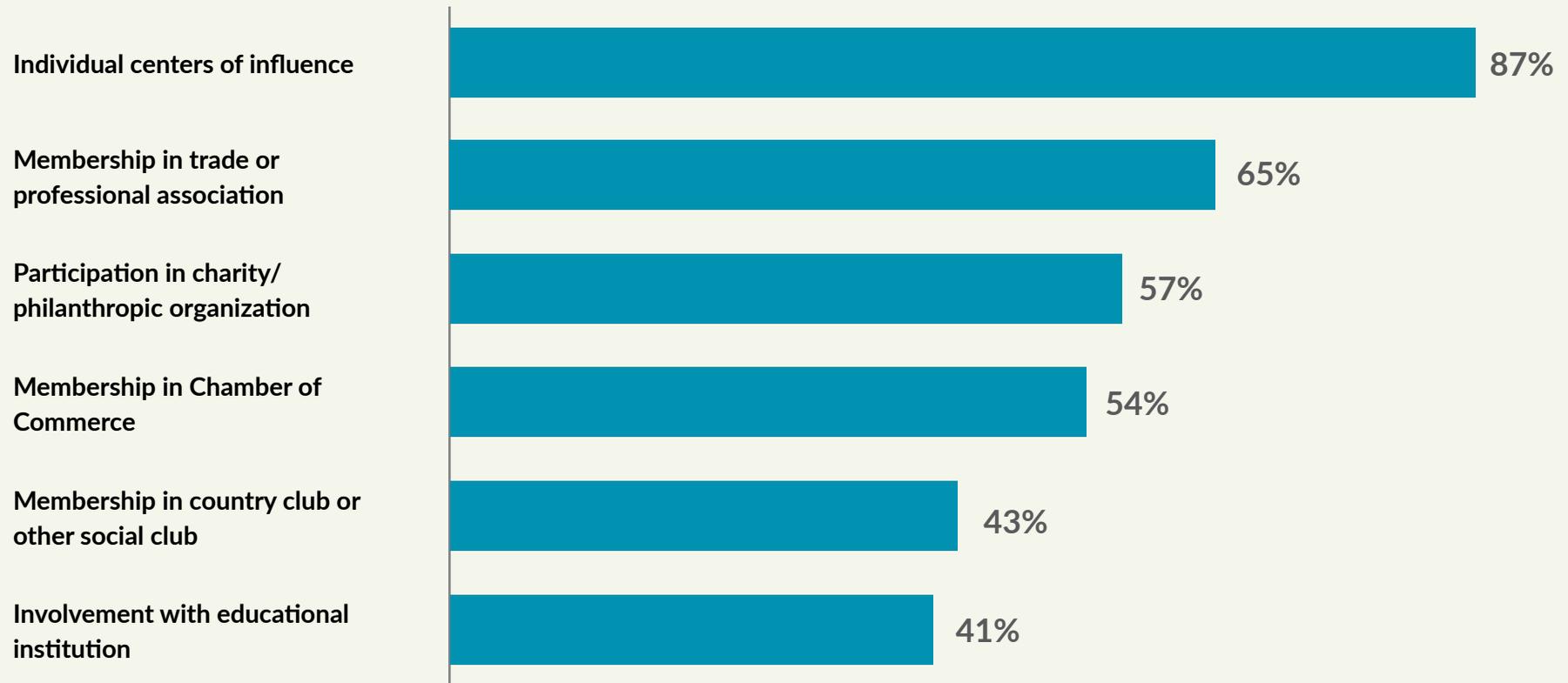
### Top 5 Warm Sources Used by Leaders

1. Agent/Advisor Referrals
2. Warm Nominators/Centers of Influence
3. Social Media
4. Staff Referrals
5. Personal Observation



Listen to a [GAMA Foundation](#) podcast with Tom Biljan of Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan sharing warm-source recruiting strategies.

### *How Leaders are Involved in Their Communities*



## Build Strong Relationships with Centers of Influence

Centers of influence are the second most frequently used recruiting source used by high-performing leaders. The quality of candidates generated by this source is second only to that generated by agent and advisor referrals.

To build strong relationships with your centers of influence:

- Identify and approach potential centers of influence.
- Keep centers of influence informed and involved.

<i>Types of Centers of Influence</i>	2006 Survey Percent of Leaders Using	2020 Survey Percent of Leaders Using
Business (non-industry) friends and acquaintances	86%	90%
Friends and acquaintances in the industry	68%	85%
Policyholders	65%	30%
CPA firms and accountants	53%	35%
Law firms and attorneys	48%	15%
Bankers	47%	0%
Family members	40%	50%
Clergy	37%	5%
Business suppliers and vendors	31%	Not Reported
Civic organizations	Not Reported	35%
Social media connections	Not Reported	50%
Colleges and universities	Not Reported	45%



**Rent out a movie theater for a family friendly show and invite your centers of influence and their families. Before the show starts, talk about what you do and the impact you have on your clients' lives.**

## Identify Potential Centers of Influence

Recruiting and developing a quality center of influence requires time and effort, but it is well worth the results. The goal is to develop long-term relationships with individuals who will invest time and a portion of their professional credibility to help you build your business.

To identify potential centers of influence, consider the following:

- Individuals you know and respect and who also respect you.
- Individuals who respect your company, firm or agency.
- Business and community leaders whose networks are different from yours.
- Individuals who are well connected and can identify recruiting leads and other potential centers of influence.
- Individuals who are respected by the people they recommend.



**Look for a common theme among your top producers. What was their journey? Do they have similar backgrounds? Did they come from similar industries? That's where to look for your centers of influence.**



## Meet with Potential Centers of Influence

Use the outline below to prepare for your initial meetings with centers of influence:

1. Introduction.
2. Key topics:
  - Benefits to the center of influence.
  - Highlights of the profession.
  - Expectations and requirements for agents and advisors.
  - Training, coaching and mentoring provided.
  - Initial and potential earnings.
  - Selection process you use.
  - Ideal candidate profile.
3. Collect names using prompting questions and/or a nominator checklist.
4. Agree on how the center of influence will introduce you.
5. Share how you will follow-up with candidates and how you will follow-up with the nominator.
6. Thank you!



Watch a video of top field leaders discussing their center of influence strategies.

## Keep Centers of Influence Informed and Involved

*“It’s critical that you include your centers of influence in your business as much as possible. Invite them to agency events, the summer picnic, golf outings, etc. Get them meeting your reps and understanding what this career is all about. If you can make them a part of your team as much as possible, it’s going to add huge dividends to your business.”*

—Jon Voegele, Agency Vice President, COUNTRY Financial®

If the center of influence referral process seems very similar to the agent/advisor referral process, that’s because it is. Top performers consider centers of influence members of their recruiting team. They put processes in place to ensure regular communication and follow-up with centers of influence in order to build long-term, productive relationships.

- 1. Contact centers of influence regularly.** Most leaders contact centers of influence at least quarterly, and often monthly. They schedule regular calls and face-to-face meetings and create newsletters and other communications to keep centers of influence updated on agency or firm activities.
- 2. Stay on track.** While meeting with your centers of influence is often an enjoyable activity, the meeting must be treated as a business meeting or it will be a wasted opportunity. Be clear that the purpose of the meeting is to generate referrals. Being respectful of people’s time builds trust and strengthens the relationship. At the end of the meeting, you and your center of influence should both feel it was time well spent.
- 3. Educate centers of influence.** Take time to review your ideal candidate profile at each meeting. Explain your recruiting and selection process and how you approach referrals so they are comfortable people they refer will be treated professionally. Give feedback on the people referred and explain why they were, or were not, strong candidates
- 4. Follow-up.** Always follow-up with centers of influence to thank them for their referrals. Keep them updated on the status of referred candidates.
- 5. Include your centers of influence in agency or firm events.** Recognize centers of influence for their efforts in your newsletters and other communications. Invite them to social and professional events at your agency or firm. The more they get to know your team and your culture, the more likely they are to refer strong candidates.



**Ask your centers of influence what the ideal candidate profile is for their businesses. Help them first before you ask them for help.**



## Tools You Can Use

### *Questions to Prompt Centers of Influence for Referrals*

1. During the past few months, which salesperson have you met who impressed you the most?
2. Do you know someone who has gone as far as possible in his or her work?
3. Do you know someone who is about to graduate from college whose career is not yet determined?
4. Is anyone you know being forced to change employment for reasons beyond their control, for example downsizing?
5. Do you know anyone who is working beneath their ability?
6. Is there anyone who called you seeking a position — someone you didn't have room for, but would jump at the chance to hire?
7. Do you know anyone who is successful but would prefer to run their own business, set their own markets and determine their own financial potential?
8. Do you know a teacher who has an exceptionally outgoing personality and who is looking for a financially rewarding career?
9. Do you know any graduates or soon-to-be graduates who have majored in business or marketing and who wish to control their futures from the beginning of their careers?
10. Do you know anyone about to retire from the military who is looking for an opportunity to quickly excel in a second career?



## Tools You Can Use

### *Center of Influence Memory Jogger*

Whom do you know who is passionate about serving others, is trustworthy, caring and self-motivated, and is looking for more meaningful work with a purpose? Don't think only of the people looking for new careers. Think about the people who may also know someone to recommend. Use this list to remind you of the people who could help.

- People active in politics or civic affairs
- Business owners or employees
- Doctors, nurses or medical staff
- Those holding executive positions
- People you've met through fundraisers for charity
- Human resource professionals
- Lawyers
- Managers or assistant managers of chain stores
- Realtors®
- Salespeople (advertising, cars, appliances, furniture, supplies, pharmaceutical, travel)
- Social workers
- Youth organization volunteers
- The best salesperson you know
- Bankers or bank employees
- Religious leaders, staff or council members
- Entrepreneurs
- Friends or neighbors
- Former high school or college classmates
- Members of Jaycees, Rotary or other service organizations
- Youth sports coaches
- Parents re-entering the workforce
- Recent college graduates
- Social acquaintances (hobbies, dinner, sporting activities)
- Teachers, principals, coaches
- Members of volunteer groups
- Anyone else you think highly of



Visit [GAMAHub](#) for a downloadable form of this memory jogger.

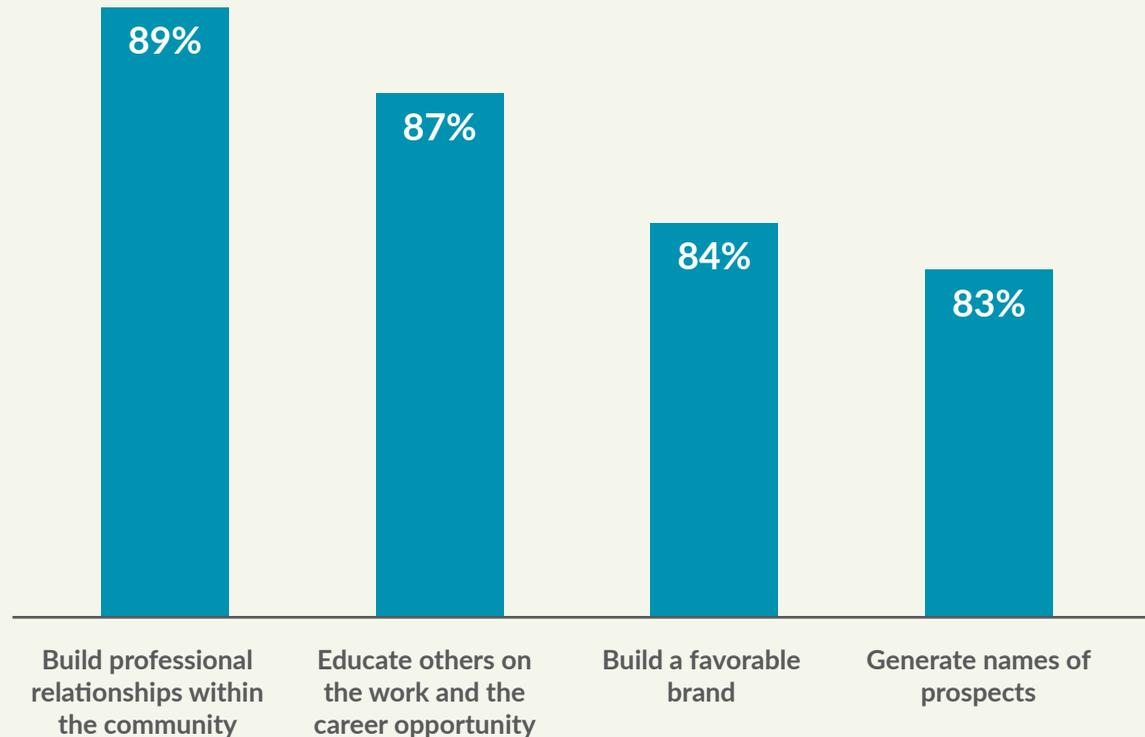
## Connect with Your Community

Ninety-two percent of the leaders in our research indicated that community involvement is important to their recruiting process. As beneficial as it can be for recruitment, however, these leaders emphasized that passion for a cause or a project should drive your involvement. If you participate solely for recruiting purposes, you will lose credibility.

To connect with your community:

- Decide where and how to get involved.
- Manage your involvement.

### Top 4 Reasons For Community Involvement



Download a free copy of the Foundation eBook, *Recruiting Through Community Involvement* at [www.gamafoundation.org](http://www.gamafoundation.org).

## Decide Where and How to Get Involved

Start with your passion. Leaders in our research could not emphasize this enough. A motivation that comes from the heart will lead you to other people with a similar passion and commitment. Over time, the connections you build will lead to more widespread recognition of your agency or firm and broaden your pool of prospects.

Options to consider include:

- **Join business organizations.** The local chamber of commerce and business networks, such as Business Networking International (BNI), provide a professional focus as well as opportunities to work with others to make the community better.
- **Look close to home.** Serve as a coach, leader or mentor. Local schools or volunteer organizations, such as SCORE, provide many avenues for connecting. If you have children, consider how you can support their activities, such as sports or scouting. Become more active in your faith community.
- **Volunteer for a cause.** Is there a charity or philanthropic cause you are passionate about? Seek out local non-profits, community associations and service groups such as Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs. Organizations like these always need help.
- **Create your own referral group.** Within your existing network, pull together five to 10 businesspeople with referral needs of their own. Meet monthly to talk about your recruiting needs and strategies. Make a point of helping other businesspeople, and they will help you too.



[Watch a video](#) where top field leaders discuss their community involvement strategies.

## Manage Your Involvement

Participating in the work of local organizations requires significant time commitment. Solid, trusting relationships develop when you consistently show up, contribute your thoughts and efforts and demonstrate your commitment to the cause.

To manage your involvement, consider the following:

- **Set limits.** Decide how much money and time you are willing to dedicate. Too many commitments can tax your ability to serve clients and may dilute your brand in the community.
- **Create an internal leadership board.** These individuals can meet regularly to discuss upcoming events and share ideas for community participation.
- **Assign a coordinator.** Designate a person to handle the administrative work related to financial contributions, fundraising commitments, sponsorships and so forth. This frees up your time to be out in the community meeting people.

## Top 10 Business Networking Groups You Should Join<sup>6</sup>

1. BNI
2. MasterMind Groups
3. LeTip
4. Women In Business Networking (WIB)
5. Chamber of Commerce
6. Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)
7. Local Merchant Associations
8. Rotary Club International
9. Kiwanis
10. The Optimists Club

## The 7 Best Small Business Groups for Networking<sup>7</sup>

1. Your Local Chamber of Commerce
2. SCORE
3. Entrepreneurs' Organization
4. BNI
5. Young Entrepreneurs Council
6. American Marketing Association
7. Rotary Club International

# USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A WARM-SOURCE RECRUITING TOOL

Having a social media presence is no longer a “nice to have.” It’s expected in today’s business environment. In a 2020 survey of industry leaders, social media ranked third as the most used source for recruiting. Top-performing leaders understand the power that social media has to connect with people in a personal way.

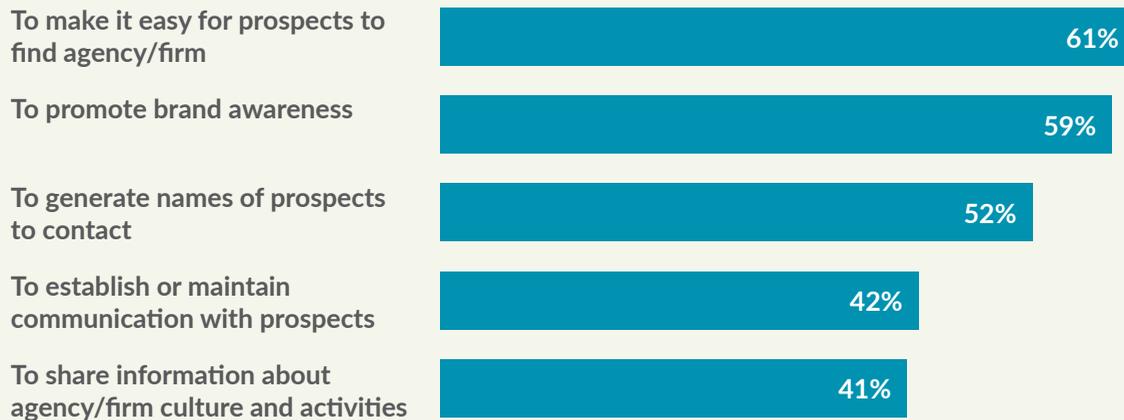
To use social media as a warm-source recruiting tool in your agency or firm:

- Use social media to build relationships and connections.
- Introduce candidates to your culture through social media.
- Find active and passive job seeker through social media.

*“Social media is gaining momentum [as a recruiting tool] because people see it as personalized stories coming right to their phone and feel like it’s something that’s directly for them. Without a social media presence, your business doesn’t exist in the client’s eyes.”*

—Bellaria Jimenez, President, MassMutual Tri State

## Top 5 Ways Industry Leaders Use Social Media



Download a free copy of the Foundation eBook, *Recruiting Through Social Media*, at [www.gamafoundation.org](http://www.gamafoundation.org).

## Use Social Media to Build Relationships and Connections

The power of social media is the ability to connect, communicate and engage with people you normally wouldn't be able to meet. Groups and online communities can help you connect with people who have similar interests or characteristics. And as you develop relationships over time, you can get warm introductions to their connections.

In addition to building connections with potential candidates, experienced leaders also use the power of connections to:

- **Identify new centers of influence.** Many leaders use social media, for example, to connect with coaches, alumni groups or career centers at local colleges and universities.
- **Gather referrals from agents and advisors.** When asking for referrals from your agents or advisors, review their connections on social media. Delve deeper into the connections of their connections. This is an excellent way to identify potential candidates who may not otherwise come to mind.



Watch a video of top leaders discussing  
**how they use social media in recruiting.**



**Consider hosting online events via social media platforms to encourage candidate interaction with your agency or firm. Be sure to troubleshoot the entire process, and do practice runs to ensure it goes smoothly. Test on multiple platforms and devices before going live.**

## Introduce Candidates to Your Culture Through Social Media

Many leaders use social media platforms to increase the visibility of their agencies and firms and to highlight their cultures. This helps potential candidates picture themselves in the workplace. Foundation research has shown that many people do not understand the agent and advisor roles or believe they do not have the required qualifications. Social media is an excellent way to educate people about the profession.

To highlight your culture using social media consider posting:

- Video testimonials that demonstrate the difference agents and advisors make in the lives of their clients.
- Information that demonstrates the benefits of the career.
- Pictures of awards and recognition ceremonies.
- Messages to welcome new agents or advisors to the agency or firm.
- Training and development opportunities.
- Celebrations and social activities such as family days and birthdays.
- Pictures of community and volunteer events the agency or firm participates in.



**Shine a spotlight on your agents and advisors by highlighting success stories. Give candidates a peek into a day in the life of an agent or advisor. Help them to visualize themselves working in your agency or firm.**

## Find Active and Passive Job Seekers Through Social Media

Social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, offer tools to help you identify and connect active and passive job seekers tailored to your needs. These platforms also provide more insight into potential candidates.

Tools most often used for identifying job seekers include:

- **The group function to connect with people in target markets where ideal candidates are likely to be.** These groups may also offer opportunities to attend and present at local events.
- **Search functions to identify ideal candidates.** A search may be as simple as “athletes” or more refined to include demographics and characteristics such as “athlete” AND “Chicago.”
- **Recruiting and applicant management tools.** Tools, such as the LinkedIn Talent Hub, allow you to source, screen, manage and connect with applicants from one platform.



**Towns, communities and neighborhoods often have websites. Posting on these pages is a great way to reach out to the community.**



## Tools You Can Use

### *Strategies to Use Social Media as a Warm-Source Recruiting Tool*

- 1. Have a plan.** What is your goal in creating a social presence and engaging with others on social media? Brand visibility? Connecting with nominators? Recruiting? What is your content strategy? Knowing the results you are looking for and setting specific goals are the first steps in building your social media plan.
- 2. Dedicate time and resources.** The world of social media is fast-paced and dynamic. Adding the occasional post is not going to yield the results you want. Dedicate time to build new connections, follow up with prospects or post new information. Most leaders recommend posting daily. Many agencies and firms have marketing and/or recruiting staff dedicated to social media.
- 3. Go deep.** Go deep into your network and find out who your connections are connected to. Join groups where you have common interests or are target markets. Search for connections using key words, such as “entrepreneurs.” Take advantage of the wealth of information on social media to build your own unique network.
- 4. Build credibility and provide value.** Focus on building relationships, not on marketing, product sales or job openings. Provide content that your connections will find valuable and attracts the type of people you want to recruit.
- 5. Be professional.** What you post online is forever connected to you. Be careful what you “like” online and think about the impression your postings create. Stay positive and professional.
- 6. Stay compliant.** Be sure you are following the specific compliance rules set by your company.

## Questions to Consider

1. Are the messages you use attracting strong candidates? How can you customize messages to attract the candidates you are looking for?

2. How strong is your referral process? Do agents and advisors volunteer referrals without asking? Do you meet with them on a regular basis to gather referrals?

3. What community activities are you currently involved in? Are you passionate about the causes? What other community involvement, if any, do you want to take on?

4. How engaged are your centers of influence in your business? Are they involved in agency or firm activities? Do you keep them informed of the status of candidates they refer?

5. How are you using social media to attract candidates to your agency or firm? What does your social media presence say about your business?

6. What results have you seen from these different warm-source recruiting activities?



APPLY A

# RIGOROUS AND CONSISTENT APPROACH

TO SELECTION

*“We’re not in the business of selling someone on the career or even selling them on us. We engage in a real exploration process about the career. What we’re providing is not a job. What we’re talking about is a business opportunity.”*

—Bruce Davison, President, Strategic Financial Concepts, Inc.

**Top performers don't compromise on their candidate profile or their selection process just to meet recruiting goals.** They are committed to maintaining high standards in their agencies and firms, and they see the recruiting and selection process as critical to maintaining those standards.

To apply a rigorous and consistent approach to selection in your agency or firm:

- Use a structured selection process.
- Assess candidates to check for fit with the profession and with your culture.



**Watch a video of top field leaders discussing their selection practices.**



**Schedule a VIP interview with candidates and their spouse, significant other or, for younger candidates, their parents.**

## Use a Structured Selection Process

*“It’s incredibly important that you have a process and you stick with it. It may not be the exact same conversation with every candidate, but it must be a consistent approach. The candidate wants consistency as well. They want to know what the process is and how far along they are in the process. You have to be able to explain that upfront.”*

—Michael Kane, Managing Partner, Empire Wealth Strategies

Top-performing leaders take a systematic and consistent approach to selection, ensuring that each candidate goes through the same process. They consider the selection process a complete system, not an independent series of steps. Each step is key to the process and serves a specific purpose.

Top-performing leaders are also more rigorous in their selection approach, screening and selecting at each stage of the process. When others are determining if a candidate can do the job, top performers are still evaluating, “Do we want this candidate? Does this candidate fit with our agency and culture?”

Top performers typically:

- Use more selection tests
- Use a longer pre-contract process.
- Involve more people in the interview process.
- Use more job-sampling activities.
- Focus on prospecting activities.
- Have a richer understanding of the purpose of each step in their selection process.

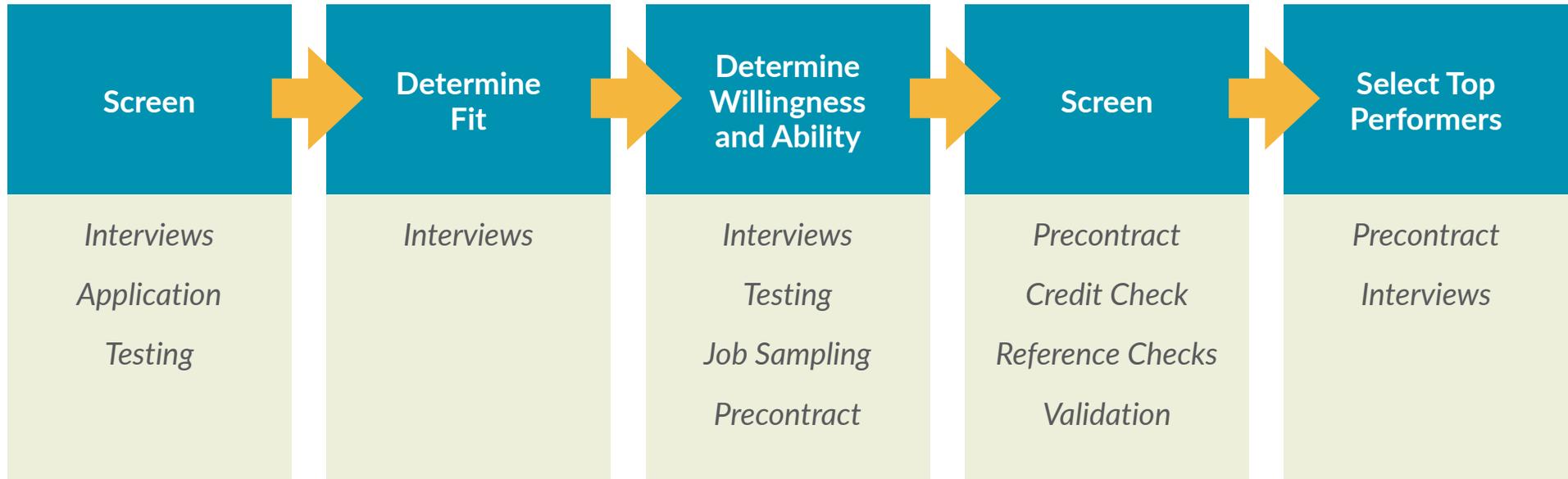


**Use a checklist at key points in the selection process to debrief and to ensure that no steps in the process have been missed.**



**Listen to a the Foundation podcast with Michael Kane of Empire Wealth Strategies on applying a rigorous and consistent approach to selection.**

## Steps in a High-Performing Field Leader's Selection Process



Ask yourself two questions about every prospective candidate: 1) Do I like being around this person? And 2) Would I bring this person out to dinner with my best client?



## Tools You Can Use

### *Strategies to Maintain a Structured Selection Process*

- 1. Clearly define the purpose of each step in your selection process.** What will you know at the end of the step? What decisions will you be able to make?
- 2. Actively manage the selection process.** Evaluate steps for maximum effectiveness and identify areas of improvement. Discuss selection standards regularly.
- 3. Place a high emphasis on screening.** Screen throughout the entire process. Eliminate candidates at specific stages.
- 4. Ensure consistency.** Use checklists, forms and other tools to ensure consistency. Follow a structured interview format to ensure each candidate is evaluated in the same way.
- 5. Trust the process.** Don't skip or change steps for certain candidates. Don't make exceptions for candidates who don't pass tests or meet activity requirements.
- 6. Stay compliant.** Make sure you are following agency, firm and company policies and procedures regarding what is and is not appropriate in your process.

## Assess Candidates to Check for Fit with the Profession and with Your Culture

Top-performing field leaders spend more time than their lower-performing peers assessing a candidate's fit with the culture and the profession. They involve more people in the screening process and assess how candidates' fit with the culture and their willingness to perform the activities required for success.

*Tools used to assess fit with the culture include:*



Interviews with the leadership team.



Interviews with other agents or advisors in the agency or firm.



Interviews with the candidate's spouse or significant other.



Attending agency or firm meetings and social activities.



**Put the ball in the candidate's court. Give them assignments to complete and return with specific deadlines. Ask them to follow-up with you as a next step. How they respond to these requirements lets you know their level of commitment.**

*Tools used to evaluate candidates' willingness and ability to perform include job-sampling activities that focus on prospecting and referral gathering such as:*



Project  
100/200/300.



Conducting  
fact finding  
interviews,  
market surveys  
and financial  
needs analyses.



Learning scripts.



Participating  
in peer-  
accountability  
groups.



Attending phone  
clinics.



Observing sales  
calls.



Completing  
business plans.



Use the licensing phase as a part of the selection process. This helps you to determine how coachable candidates are and gives you a sense of their inner drive to succeed.



## Tools You Can Use

### *Use the Compensation and Expectations Interview to Assess Fit*

The compensation and expectations interview is a reality check that is an important part of assessing fit. It includes a strong focus on the activities that are most critical to professional success as well as clarifying how agents and advisors get paid. During the compensation interview:

1. Explain how agents or advisors get paid, the earnings potential in the early years compared with later years and the activity and time frame typically required to achieve results.
2. Preview a model work week and the expectations for the first three months, six months and first year on the job.
3. Explain the importance of prospecting and referral-gathering activities.
4. Introduce your agency or firm activity management process.
5. Preview accountability, training and social events.
6. Emphasize the support new agents or advisors will receive such as joint work, mentoring and coaching.

## Questions to Consider

1. Do you know the purpose of each step in your selection process? What criteria are you assessing in each step?

2. How do you assess for fit with the profession and your culture?

3. How do you assess a candidate's ability and willingness to perform the activities required for success?

4. How often are you selling versus selecting in your process? Where should you be doing each?

5. How do you ensure that your process is consistent with each candidate?

6. How do you measure the effectiveness of your selection process? What can you do to strengthen the process?

# A CALL TO ACTION

If you have any doubts about the importance of the work that we do, consider these statistics.<sup>8</sup>

- 20 percent of Americans have less than \$5,000 saved for retirement.
- 15 percent of Americans have nothing saved for the future.
- 56 percent of Americans don't know how much they will need to retire.
- 33 percent of baby boomers, the generation closest to retirement age, have \$25,000 or less in retirement savings.

The work agents and advisors do to help people secure their financial futures is more important than ever. Yet, our industry is shrinking. According to Cerulli Associates, about 40 percent of advisors are planning to retire in the next 10 years.<sup>9</sup> A study conducted by the Financial Planning Association found that 60 percent of advisors within five years of retirement don't have a succession plan in place. And almost half of those 5 to 10 years away from retirement also lack a plan.<sup>10</sup>

Recruiting is a long-term mindset. To remain relevant — to create a lasting legacy — we must bring new advisors into the profession. It can be a hard sell. Succeeding in this career requires sacrifices early on. But if you believe in what this profession offers and the good that we do, then you know we must lead by example.

As leaders, it is up to us to build capacity and breathe new life into our profession — by attracting new and diverse people into the career — by building relationships within our communities — and by being vigilant in selecting candidates who are passionate about helping others.

If you truly believe in something, it's amazing what can happen.

**Edward G. Deutschlander, CLU CLF**  
CEO, North Star Resource Group  
GAMA Foundation Chair, 2019 – 2020

Ed Deutschlander currently serves as CEO at North Star Resource Group. Ed became only the second CEO in North Star's history on January 1st, 2016. North Star has over \$7 Billion of client assets\* entrusted to them and their origins trace back to 1908 in the Twin Cities community.

Ed is recognized as one of the premier recruiters in the financial services industry. He is the creator of *Recruiting University* and *Do Well by Doing Good*. These two products have educated and been used by thousands of financial services leaders. Since 1998, at the age of 27, Ed has been hired as a consultant by many of the largest insurance companies in the world to help them strengthen their recruitment, training and leadership development programs. North Star's training program is featured in two New York Times Best Sellers, *What the Dog Saw* by Malcolm Gladwell and *Use Your Head to Get Your Foot In The Door* by Harvey Mackay.

\*Figures as of 2017

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit [www.gamafoundation.org](http://www.gamafoundation.org) for more resources on best practices in recruiting and selection, including:

Title	Format
Apply a Rigorous and Consistent Approach to Selection	Podcast
Assessing Candidates for Fit	Video
Attracting the Right People	Guidebook
Building a High-Performance Business	Workshop
Building a High-Performance Business: Research in Action	Book
Building a High-Performance Business Research	Whitepaper
Center of Influence Part 1	Video
Center of Influence Part 2	Video
Creating a High-Impact Recruiting Culture: Research in Action	Book
Cultivate a Strong Recruiting Mindset in Your Agency or Firm	Podcast
Focus on Warm-Source Recruiting	Podcast
Recruiting for Diversity	Video
Recruiting Through Agent/Advisor Referrals	Video
Recruiting Through Community Involvement	eBook
Recruiting Through Community Involvement Part 1	Video
Recruiting Through Community Involvement Part 2	Video
Recruiting Through Personal Observation	Video
Recruiting Through Social Media	eBook
Recruiting Women to the Advisor Career	eBook
The Ideal Candidate Profile Part 1	Video
The Ideal Candidate Profile Part 2	Video
The Power of Teams	Guidebook



**GAMA members can access many more resources on recruiting and selection on [GAMAHub](https://www.gamahub.com).**

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Since its creation in 1990, the Foundation has funded major studies on leadership topics, including future trends for firms and advisors, attracting high-quality prospects, recruiting and selecting new advisors, launching new advisors, retaining successful advisors, mentoring and coaching practices, effective local marketing, building successful advisor teams, developing high-performance leadership teams and launching new frontline (sales) managers.

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## Endnotes

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