

## GET A MAXIMUM RETURN FROM ICSC

Pat Pallentino & Willy Bolander

Here is my take from observing those sponsors that year after year end up hiring some of the top talent they meet at ICSC. The secret is engagement and here are some specific tips to help you achieve similar success. I break these tips into three categories: what to do before the event, during the event, and after the event.

### Before the event:

1. Leading up to the event the competition will usually publish a list of the competitors, along with resumes or links to LinkedIn profiles. Do what every good salesperson does with a prospect - advanced research. This research effort allows you to learn about potential new hires and even reach out to key candidates before the event.
2. Study and understand what the competition event is about. In other words, what is the product being sold, how are the students being evaluated, what is the format (i.e., tournament or free-for-all?) of the event, etc.? Then at the event offer advice and feedback to the competitors. In many ways, this is an act of service to the student competitors. Again, what every successful salesperson does is offer value to their prospects.

### During the event:

3. At the competition, bring enough staff including human resources personnel, sales people, and even top executives. Having a large enough group in attendance makes sure you have the resources needed to man your career fair booth, while also fully participating in judging or buying for the actual competition. A good minimum is least 4 or 5 employees.
4. Also, nearly every competition offers a variety of opportunities for after hours, informal engagement. Perhaps a networking reception with food and drinks, or a night of bowling and games. Participate in all possible informal social or networking events. This is Gen Z and they are increasingly concerned with the social dynamics of the companies attempting to recruit them. Engagement in these types of informal activities work wonders for showing candidates what your culture looks like, how your employees interact with one another, and whether they "fit in."

### After the event:

5. Once the event has concluded, continue to engage with your prospective future employees. It may be months after the event before the student is ready to make a decision, so it is essential to keep in contact. Sometimes this might involve arranging a visit or a ride-a-long or, for a very desirable candidate, even setting up an ongoing mentorship arrangement.

Yes that is a lot of effort. But I suspect that ensuring the success of your sales organization is worthy of such effort. Further, what you get in return are sales people that are fully productive in approximately one-third the time as those hired from other sources. That is unparalleled ROI!