



Scott Simon, Betterhire **Birmingham's Certified Know I.T. All**

I once made the mistake of ignoring Scott Simon's advice. My all-time greatest Account Executive had decided that, after six years in marketing communications, it was time to try something new. Almost immediately, I found an unbelievable candidate for the position, and she was friends with Scott.

When I told him I was going to hire her, he paused and said, "I don't think she's a good fit for you." I hired her anyway. And for six weeks, I was thrilled to report that Scott was wrong. Until, suddenly and unexpectedly, it became clear he was right. And boy, was he ever right.

Which points to one of the most-cited strengths mentioned among the Betterhire clients I interviewed. "The thing about Scott is," says Illumicare's GT LaBorde, "he knows me and what I'm looking for so well that I really don't have to go into detail anymore about what I need. I've hired virtually everyone he's sent me.

"The short-term benefit is, I don't have to waste my time looking for the right people. The long-term benefit is, I actually have the right people. He knows me and my management style, and he makes it very easy to find the right people."

"Scott's the Go-To guy for finding great tech people. He's sent me half a dozen over the years," says J-J-Solutions VP Bob Carver. "He's even sent me leads for new business. With Scott, it's more than just a professional relationship. He's a friend. We do breakfast or lunch at

least once a month. Heck, I even went to his wedding." Which points to something else that's fairly unique to Scott: The inordinate number of people who'll tell you he's one of their dearest friends.

"I'd like to think clients call me because they trust me," Scott says. "The companies I work best with bring me in as a true strategic partner. I've helped a lot of startup companies avoid bad hiring mistakes, and I've worked with larger companies undergoing significant cultural transformations."

Who are you really?

Pace Runners, a Birmingham-based logistics company, is a perfect example of the latter type of client. "Sure, we're known as a logistics company," says IT Director Patrick McCarty, "but we're really a data company. Scott saw that without my having to explain it to him — which is why we work together so well. We've hired three people he sent us, and they've all fit right into the culture we're building here."

You'd think Scott would prefer the challenge of working with growing entrepreneurial organizations over large institutions, but he points to UAB's IT department as a client he's genuinely enjoyed serving. "They're doing some really special things in that department. They're creating new business models right within the University system."



The only clients he avoids?

"Companies who are just looking for an order taker. They're not willing to give people like me the time to understand what they really need, and that invariably leads to bad hires. When that happens, I can typically project within a month, sometimes within a week, how long that bad hire is going to last there."

That said, he's quick to point out, not even the smartest companies are immune to bad hires. "The biggest mistake anyone can make is hiring someone simply because they like them. The right person is not always the person you like the most." Wish he'd said that to me before my own aforementioned train wreck. Oh wait, he did.

Ironically, for a guy who focuses on Tech hires (with a growing practice in Management and Sales & Marketing), Technology has not had the devastating effect on his business that it's had on so many industries. "Sure, there are plenty of websites that give companies looking for the kind of talent I provide the ability to hire on their own. But what they're typically hiring are people who leave them unhappy. One reason people call me is because I've already screened all the wrong people. And they also know when something confidential is involved, I'll keep their secrets."

A happy ending

I'm thrilled to report that I've also experienced what can happen when you listen to Scott's advice. My go-to SEO guy was unavailable for a client of mine, due to a conflict of interest — so I called Scott. The woman he sent me is incredibly sharp. She's enthusiastic. We click on just about every level. And unlike my experience with "Miss Train Wreck," our relationship has been tremendously rewarding. Just as Scott predicted.

Oh, and in case you're wondering who she is, forget it. I'm not telling. And neither is Scott.

