



**FOUR  
REASONS  
A-PLAYERS  
CHANGE  
JOBS**



## COMPANY

The compelling story that makes an organization exciting

## PEOPLE

The talent level, leadership style and organizational culture

**A-players  
seek opportunities  
which revolve around  
these criteria**



## JOB

The responsibilities and roles leading to impact and exposure

## OPPORTUNITY

The progression and benefits a candidate can attain and obtain

# THE COMPANY

The compelling story that makes an organization exciting

## + Prestige

- Does this company have a brand name?
- Is the organization known as a leader or innovator in its industry?
- How will this company's name look on my résumé?

## + Direction

- What is this company's growth trajectory and performance goals?
- Do the organization's leaders have a compelling strategy to realize those goals?
- Is this company poised to do exciting things which will enhance its appearance on my résumé?

# The Company

## A compelling story

You're a talented executive thriving in a Fortune 500 firm ... or the leader of a fast-paced start-up or private equity backed organization. Sometimes you sit back and think, "Why would I join any other company?"

At Charles Aris, we have learned that there are four reasons A-level talents make career transitions. Perhaps none is more important than the pedigree and potential of the company that is pursuing top talent. When considering a change from one company to another, A-players want to be inspired by and attracted to an organization. To do so, a company must have a compelling story and be able to effectively pitch itself.

**As a hiring authority**, attracting top talent to your team requires painting a picture of where you came from, where you are now, and where you plan to go. **If you're considering a new role**, it's imperative to evaluate the company's past, present and future holistically to find the best fit. Let's dig into the details:

- + **Where we came from:** Whether a company has been in business for a century or is a two-year-old start-up, it's important for candidates to understand the organization's prologue. As world-renowned physicist Carl Sagan once said, "You must know the past to understand the present." The same holds true for painting an intriguing picture of your organization. Highlighting major successes or transformations will help build the foundation of understanding between your organization and its candidates. Think of this section as the Attract stage, where an organization works to pique the interest of A-players.
- + **Where we are now:** Few people enjoy being thrust into situations where they have no context, and top executives who become candidates are no different. Whether you just completed a major M&A deal or secured the series-B round of fundraising for your firm, it's important to stress the situation in which your company finds itself now when speaking with candidates. This section is critical to enabling A-players to understand the situation and environment they would enter.
- + **Where we plan to go:** Using this section to explain why an A-player should join your organization is vital to landing top talent. A-players are valuable assets who add immediate and long-term value to your organization. Companies who have a go-forward plan and can convincingly present that plan, with the A-player included as a key piece of the future, are often successful at obtaining and retaining top talent. Remember: Candidates want to see how they fit into a company's future; organizations must prioritize that fit when navigating the hiring process.

Along with the other reasons A-players make job transitions (The People, The Job, The Opportunity), we've found that these pillars help form the foundation for attracting top talent to organizations. Nearly 40 percent of the decision-making process that clients use to hire talent revolves around cultural fit, with technical fit comprising the other 60 percent or so of the equation. Using your company's story to shape how candidates perceive the organization's culture – and how they might fit in – will provide a significant boost in helping you attract and retain A-players.

# THE PEOPLE

The talent level, leadership style and culture of the company

## + Talent of colleagues

- How long have most team members been with the company?
- Does the company have a turnover problem?
- What is the educational background of colleagues (and is it similar to mine?)
- What special skills do team members (and most notably my superiors) bring to the table?
- What new skills and competencies will I learn from these team members?

## + Corporate culture

- What's the leadership style of my superiors?
- What's the work-life balance at this organization?
- How social are the people in this company?

# The People

## Talent, leadership and culture

You've probably heard the phrase "People work for people."

In today's world, the right mix of people is critical for attracting and retaining top talent in the marketplace. A recent Gallup study shows a number of alarming facts which prove this point:

- + Only one-third of Americans are engaged in their jobs in any given year.
- + One in two people revealed that they left a job "to get away from their manager to improve their overall life at some point in their career."

What does that mean for you?

**If you're a hiring authority seeking top talent**, you should be selling your organization and culture to prospective team members. Charles Aris colleague Brent Anthony has written an illuminating piece about the imperative of cultural fit in your organization.

This is something I realized was incredibly important to me from day one in the workforce. From my first job mowing lawns to working as a trainer at Panera Bread in high school to my role today as an associate practice leader at Charles Aris, I've seen firsthand that the most painstaking and monotonous tasks become less so when you have the right leader motivating you.

**If you're an employee considering a new role**, ask clarifying questions to determine if there's a fit between your objectives and the company's offerings. There are a number of questions you can ask prospective employers to evaluate this fit:

1. What's the typical educational and professional background of my prospective peers? What's their typical tenure here?
2. What's the management style of my prospective superiors?
3. What's the work-life balance at this organization? What does a typical day look like?
4. What are the organization's values and cultural indicators? Ask yourself: Does this align with my values?
5. How social is this organization? Ask yourself: Does that align with my social needs?
6. What will I learn from the people here that I don't already know?



# THE JOB

The roles and responsibilities which ensure that this position has *impact* and exposure

## + Roles & Responsibilities

- What will I be doing on a daily basis?
- What challenges will I be expected to solve?
- What goals will I be expected to accomplish?
- How will solving these challenges directly impact the organization and the people within it?

## + Title

- How does the title I'm being offered compare to the title that I have now? (This is typically more important than a candidate will indicate. After all, they have to tell their friends and family about it!)

## + Reporting Structure

- To whom am I reporting?
- How far from the top does my boss fall in the organizational structure?
- What level of **exposure** to senior leaders can I expect?

## + Resources

- What resources are available to me in this position?
- Will I manage a budget?
- Will any team members report to me (along solid or dotted lines)?
- What about operational support?

# The Job

## Impact and exposure

A-players typically aren't looking for a job. They already have one – and in most cases it's one in which they're thriving. Whenever they do consider an opportunity, though, most A-players try to determine whether it holds the degree of impact and exposure they're seeking.

It's easy to craft a job description with a few bullet points which highlight key responsibilities, but such job descriptions rarely tell a compelling story. Top executives want exposure to organizations' highest-ranking decision-makers so that they can truly make an impact in new roles. As a result, it's imperative that both the hiring authority and the potential hire have open lines of communication to clearly define any given job's opportunities, expectations, responsibilities, resources and measurements for success.

**Hiring authorities** should highlight four key factors for A-players as they consider joining your organization – and as a **candidate**, assessing these four criteria will help determine whether a job is right for you:

**Roles & Responsibilities:** When informed or asked about the roles and responsibilities of career opportunities, A-players typically aren't trying to figure out day-to-day activities, however essential they might be. What they're really assessing: What will I be charged with accomplishing? Will my efforts have a direct impact on the organization? In what timeframe will I be expected to accomplish these objectives? Most individuals want to add value to an organization. It's essential that they understand their overarching responsibilities and what degree of impact their results will have on the organization.

**Title:** Job titles can be tricky, and they're a key part of daily conversations we have with potential candidates and formal candidates alike. Most professionals aim to move from Manager to Director to Vice President to the C-suite, etc. But organizations come in different sizes, and titles can mean entirely different things in different places. The same person with a C-suite title in a start-up might be a manager in a Fortune 100 company. Hiring authorities often need to think about establishing or preserving parity across their teams. It's important to understand the backgrounds of others in similar roles and what you'd be responsible for doing before you judge a job by its title.

**Reporting Structure:** Be sure to consider where a particular team sits in an organization and to whom you'd be reporting. Besides the direct reporting structure, try to determine whether there's exposure to the leadership team through direct responsibilities of the job or through a mentoring capacity. As noted previously, titles mean different things in different organizations, and a manager in one company could report to the CEO while another manager elsewhere could report to a director.

**Resources:** It's vital to understand the resources available to you and your team. Is the company committed to the initiatives in your areas of responsibility? Are senior leaders there willing to invest in the resources – human and technical – necessary to set you up for success?

# THE OPPORTUNITY

The career progression and financial benefits which candidates can obtain through superior performance

## + Compensation Package

- What does the entire compensation package look and feel like?
- How does it compare to what I have now in terms of cash, bonuses, stock options, restricted stock, etc.?
- What benefits are included? How do they compare to what I have now in terms of healthcare, company car, 401(k) matching, laptop, mobile phone, etc.)

## + Future Benefits

- What's in it for me (increase in salary, promotions, stock-option appreciation, bonuses, etc.) if both the company and I achieve our goals?
- What is the average annual cash compensation increase I can expect, and when is my first review?

## + Career Path

- Where does this position lead within the organization? Where does it lead outside the organization (i.e., how will it serve as a springboard to new opportunities)?
- How quickly can I move up? What milestones and thresholds must I hit to ensure promotion?

# The Opportunity

## Progression and rewards

A-players make things happen. They either find themselves in environments which allow them to put their talents to work – and, in turn, reap the rewards – or leave for a place where their impact will be embraced.

**TO THE ORGANIZATION SEEKING AN A-PLAYER:** You need to articulate how your opportunity is going to accelerate that professional's career trajectory. This might mean giving the new hire increased visibility that leads to collaboration on even more significant initiatives. It may mean outlining an obvious steppingstone to three or four future opportunities, each with impressive allure. Or it might translate to a true pay-for-performance incentive should the new hire exceed past results.

If your organization is going to land the highest-caliber talent in the marketplace, you're going to need to demonstrate top-tier thinking. You better be impressive in the way you're approaching interviews, the courting process, the all-encompassing communications, the offer letter ... everything.

An A-player will assess you and your team and everything about the hiring process – and will ask herself if she really sees an organization that provides opportunity. None of us, even the best among us, can achieve greatness alone – which means that A-players won't believe your value proposition if they see glimmers of incompetence behind a thin veil of smoke. The lesson? Get your house in order and be certain you can lay out a trajectory for this hire before you even attempt to recruit.

**TO THE A-PLAYER:** It's wise to remember that most of corporate America is not comprised of fellow A-players. This means you must be masterful in working with many B- and C-players.

As you assess potential employers, you may need to embrace the fact that joining a turnaround or struggling venture could provide an incredible opportunity to paint a masterpiece in what is an artistic wasteland. My recommendation is to explore how much freedom you will be given to effect change, as you don't want to find yourself without the needed buy-in for that change.

Try to get a sense of whether this company has ever hired anyone approaching your capability in the past, and where or how that professional progressed in the organization. It's less important that the business has never really hired someone of your caliber in the past and more important that its leaders are truly ready for the horsepower that you will provide. In other words, they better have the desire and willingness to change – and the faith in you to follow your expertise.



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around search  
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and functions.



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