



# THE POLARITY PRINCIPLE OF RECRUITING

## WHY SELLING ONLY THE DREAM COSTS YOU YOUR BEST PEOPLE

**Show me a leader who recruits off the dream of the opportunity alone, and I'll show you a leader who eventually gets demoted.**

That's not a threat — it's just how the math works out. The mechanism that gets a leader passed over rarely has anything to do with recruiting skill. It has more in common with trading.

## THE TRADE EVERY LEADER IS MAKING

Picture two traders. One chases the volatile trade — big swings, high risk, always reaching for the next spike. Some months look incredible. Other months wipe out everything the good months built. Zoom out five years and they're barely ahead of where they started — sometimes behind.

The other trader is boring on purpose. Smaller wins. Doesn't chase the high. Keeps what they make instead of re-risking it for a bigger number. Quiet, steady compounding, month over month. Five years later, the boring trader has lapped the volatile one by a wide margin — not because any single win was bigger, but because they never gave any of it back.

Recruiting off the dream alone is the volatile trade. It produces an impressive number this month — a flood of people running from whatever nightmare they were already living toward the one you just painted for them. It feels like winning. But most of that number doesn't survive first contact with the actual job, so three months from now you're recruiting the same headcount again, and again. **The number that actually gets measured — net team growth — never compounds. It just keeps resetting to zero.**

Polarity recruiting is the boring trade. Fewer people in the door. But the ones who come in already decided the hard part was worth it before they signed up — so more of them are still there in month six. Month six compounds into year two. And year two is what actually gets a leader promoted, instead of quietly replaced.

## THE POLARITY PRINCIPLE

This is the Polarity Principle at work: sell the nightmare almost as much as the dream, roughly 50/50, on purpose, before anyone ever says yes. It's the discipline that turns recruiting from a volatile trade into a compounding one.

**If you only sell the dream, you'll get people who joined for the hype — and hype doesn't have the strength to survive a hard Tuesday.** If you sell the polarity — the real cost alongside the real upside — you get people who already decided the hard part is worth it before they've knocked a single door.

## ATTRACTION IS ALSO REPULSION

Naming the nightmare on purpose will scare some people off — that's the mechanism working, not a flaw in it. The right person isn't scared away by hearing how hard it is; it strengthens their resolve. Fewer applicants, dramatically better ones. Hiring slow and right beats hiring fast and hoping — a flood of the wrong people damages a team's culture more than a slow trickle of the right ones ever will.

## WHAT THIS ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

A polarity-based recruiting conversation always has two required halves. Leave either one out and you're back to selling hype.

### THE TWO-PART STRUCTURE

Every polarity statement pairs a specific hard truth with the specific reward it buys — never one without the other:

- 1. Name the real cost, specifically.** Not "it's challenging" — the actual number. How many no's before a yes. How many months before income steadies. What an actual bad-weather week looks like.
- 2. Pair it immediately with the specific upside it buys.** Not "freedom" in the abstract — what that freedom actually looks like for someone who pushes through exactly that cost.

|                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>DREAM-ONLY PITCH</b><br><br><i>"You could be making six figures in your first year. Total freedom, be your own boss, set your own hours."</i> | <b>POLARITY PITCH</b><br><br><i>"This is commission-only. No safety net. You'll hear more no's in your first month than most people hear all year. If that's not something you can live with, this isn't for you. But if it is — the upside here is real, and it's something almost no traditional job can offer."</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**POLARITY DOESN'T END AT THE PITCH**

The same principle belongs inside the interview itself, not just the initial recruiting conversation. A leader fully bought into polarity will tell a candidate directly that they're free to walk away — and that doing so is not a failure.

|                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>DREAM-ONLY INTERVIEW</b><br><br><i>"We'd love to have you. I think you'd crush it here."</i> | <b>POLARITY INTERVIEW</b><br><br><i>"If at any point in this conversation you feel like this isn't you, there's zero shame in saying so and walking out. I'd rather you find that out now than three weeks in."</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Notice neither example undersells the upside — each just refuses to sell the upside alone. Both tell the truth about the cost in the same breath as the reward, and let the listener self-select.

**AUDIT YOUR OWN PITCH**

Before you decide whether this applies to you, sit with these honestly:

- ☐ Think about your last recruiting conversation or interview — what percentage of it was spent on the good parts of the opportunity versus the hard parts? Put a real number on it, not a vibe.
- ☐ What's the typical length of time a new recruit stays actively engaged before they go quiet and eventually quit? Give it a specific number — weeks or months, not a general sense.
- ☐ Does it feel natural to tell a recruit or interview candidate that they're free to walk away, no shame in saying this isn't for them — or is there real resistance in you when you imagine saying that out loud?
- ☐ Do you have a repeatable way to say this consistently across every recruiting conversation your team has — or does it only live in your head, on your best days?

If question three brought up any resistance, that's usually the real tell — not a flaw, just information. Selling the nightmare convincingly requires you to have made peace with the nightmare yourself first. That's rarely a scripting problem. It's usually a belief problem underneath it, and it's genuinely hard to see clearly from inside your own head.

If that's where you're at, you're not alone in it — and it's a conversation worth having with someone outside your own organization, whenever you're ready for it.