Working with Executive Search Consultants

Presentation by
Alan Walter
Partner
Dixon Walter
March 2017
Clients can sometimes be disappointed with the outcomes when using executive search – why is this? – and what can be done about it?

Individuals who don’t plan for career success generally don’t achieve it. Is this true, what can be done and how can executive search consultants help?

Some clients and candidates don’t know how to engage with executive search companies effectively.
Introduction

Anticipating some of the issues contained within these statements I will focus on how to get the best out of working with executive search consultants:

• Personal career planning and how to get the best Advice working with consultants
• The best use of executive search to hire senior staff
• General Q&A to discuss the issues most important to you
Overview of executive search services – The difference between agency and consultancy – database and network management

Candidates

▪ Career advice
▪ Market data
▪ Marketing & Networks
▪ CV review
▪ Application assistance
▪ Guidance in application process

Universities

▪ Market intelligence
▪ Recruitment strategy advice
▪ Full process management
▪ Part service/Search only
▪ Assessment and testing
Key to success in both service options

- Choosing the right partner
- Specialist knowledge and track record
- Choose the individual and not the company
- Developing a detailed understanding
- Establishing trust
- A partnership approach
- Open and honest discussions
- Regular communications and review
Career planning and finding the right partner

- Specialists and where to find them
- Individuals with the right track-record
- Connecting with and meeting right individuals
- Discuss career aspirations and realistic targets
- Set realistic expectations on follow-up
- Begin and manage the relationship
The importance of the marketing plan

Recruitment is a marketing process and the best people don’t always get the best jobs – the people who market themselves most effectively do.

- Be realistic about next-step objectives
- Understand the particular market
- Get good advice and talk to the right people
- Be connected with the right people
- Be visible
- Make use of professional networks
- Consultants can help but also use your connections
- Be open and talk regularly to keep up to date
Consultants managing a recruitment process
This is when you are most likely to interact and things to remember

- We have had the full briefing
- Understanding of the role
- Ideal candidate profile
- We are managing a process and need to do certain things
- We will be making decisions on behalf of our clients
Overview of a recruitment process – from a candidate perspective

- Search mapping and initial contacts
- Follow up and requests for information
- Applications

- Initial sift and preliminary interviews
- Short-list and final interviews
- Offers and negotiations
Initial contacts – every interaction is part of the two-way selection process

- Approaches by researchers and head-hunters
- Be prepared to share information
- Contact following adverts
- Open, honest and direct discussion
- Consider the pros and cons
- Is the job really for you?
- Person specification and essential requirements
- Consider the detail, process and practicalities
Making applications – CVs – your chance to sell yourself

- Key elements – Qualifications, career history, skills and experience, achievements, interests
- Style, format and structure
- Professional profile
- Chronological career history
- Achievements – facts and figures
- Other interests
- Tailor to the individual role
Making applications – the written statement

- How long?
- Structure and format
- Key criteria and evidence
- Achievements and positive results
- The brief is telling you the answers required
- A well-crafted explanation
- Your motivations and contributions
- Being judged on your written skills
Key elements of the continuous selection process

- Initial contacts and discussions
- Sift of applications
- Preliminary interviews with the consultant
- Pre-assessment and testing
- Informal meetings and presentations
- Panel interviews
Preliminary interviews with consultants – supporting your application

- Dealing with the practicalities – salary, location & notice etc.
- Investigating motives, career aspirations etc.
- Technical review of key experience
- Interpersonal competencies review – strategic thinking, leadership, stakeholder management, communication and influencing
- Your questions
- Full reports to University
Additional selection techniques – Final assessment centres and the support from consultants

- Preliminary and psychometric tests
- Taking up references
- Be prepared & consultant input
- Giving presentations (Power-point or not)
- Informal stakeholder meetings
- See the environment & meet the teams
- Asking your questions and an opportunity to gather additional information
- Two-way process
The panel interview – support from consultants

- Know the panel and judge the audience
- Mechanical process and set questions
- Rapport building and body language
- Be prepared and have good examples
- Don’t be shy – I not We
- Ask good, concise and strategic questions
- Be positive and leave on a high
- Always ask for feedback from consultants straight away
Offers and negotiations

- Getting the deal done
- Know what you want before
- Be realistic, honest, open, bottom line
- Haggling can create the wrong impression
- Act decisively to close the deal
- Dealing with counter-offers
- Use consultant effectively
- Deal paperwork quickly
- Finalising arrangements
- Keeping in touch
Your role as manager – mentoring others

- PDPs and career planning
- Leadership and interpersonal skills required
- Opportunities to shine
- External networking
- Advantages of a high performing and motivated team
Why use executive search consultants?

- Time and resources
- Specialist expertise and hard to fill roles
- Independence and impartial process
- Pro-active and head-hunt approach
- Effective use of marketing materials
- Expertise in selection management
- Pick a service that adds real value
How to choose the best recruitment partner & key questions to ask

- Usual selection criteria – track record, methodology and price
- Tender process that asks the right questions
- Beware marketing hype
- Compare notes with colleagues
- Track record of lead consultant and success rates
- Details on project teams and responsibilities
- Ask for references from people you trust
- Look for evidence of repeat-business
Choosing the correct service level

- Look for flexibility and value-add
- Full or part-service models to suit
- What can you do best yourselves?
- Set very clear expectations about success
- Be realistic
- Work as partners – it is both parties' responsibility to deliver success
- Set time aside to be involved
Firm foundations and the briefing process

- Knowing what you want and need
- Building a detailed profile
- Be ambitious but realistic – use the consultant
- Have the right people involved in the decision-making process
- Choose the right strategy and marketing message
- Don’t let the process get in the way of a good appointment
Effective search and head-hunting

- Starting with a blank page and no preconceptions
- Proactive search and use of networks
- Agree search parameters up-front – sector, international etc.
- Get regular search reports to update on real progress
- Make proper use of all market and anecdotal feedback
Choosing the best selection techniques

- Make sure you are testing the right things
- Jointly agree long-lists and interview formats
- Make sure you get detailed reports
- Use different tools to test different competencies
- Involve consultants and consider all of the evidence
- 2-way process and accommodating candidates
- Be decisive but don’t compromise
Conclusions
Whether personal or professional – the key is to create a relationship that is built on trust & understanding that includes:

- Choose specialists that understand HE
- Choose a specialist that knows you
- Choose quality of individual consultant
- Spend time to become partners not agents
- Regular communication
- Demand high standards

Those that agree to do all of these things are most likely to provide a good service. Those that don’t probably won’t
Questions and Answers

Thank you

Alan Walter